METALLICA ϟ THE DOORS ϟ SWEET ϟ TREMONTI

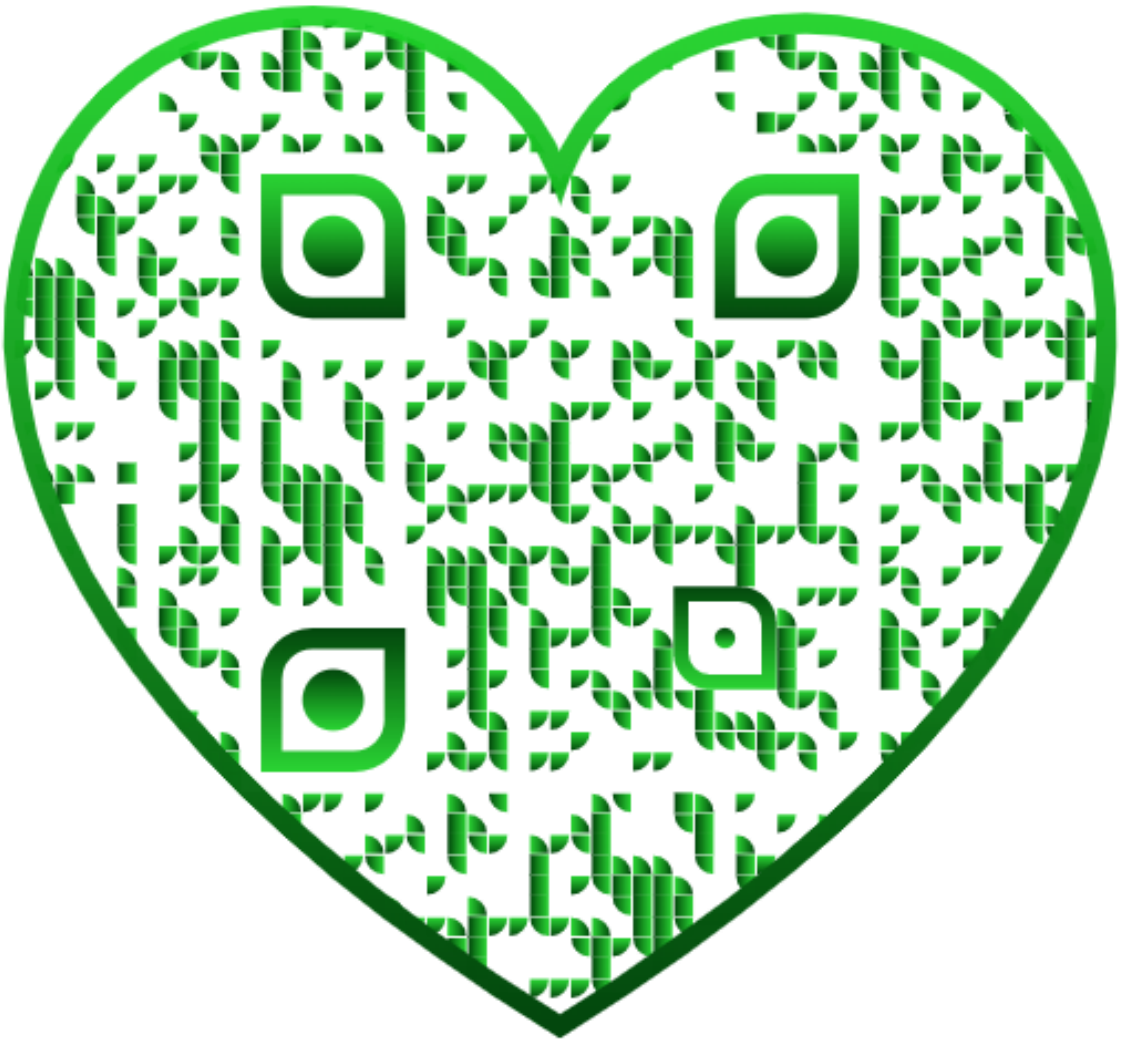
CLASSIC ROCK

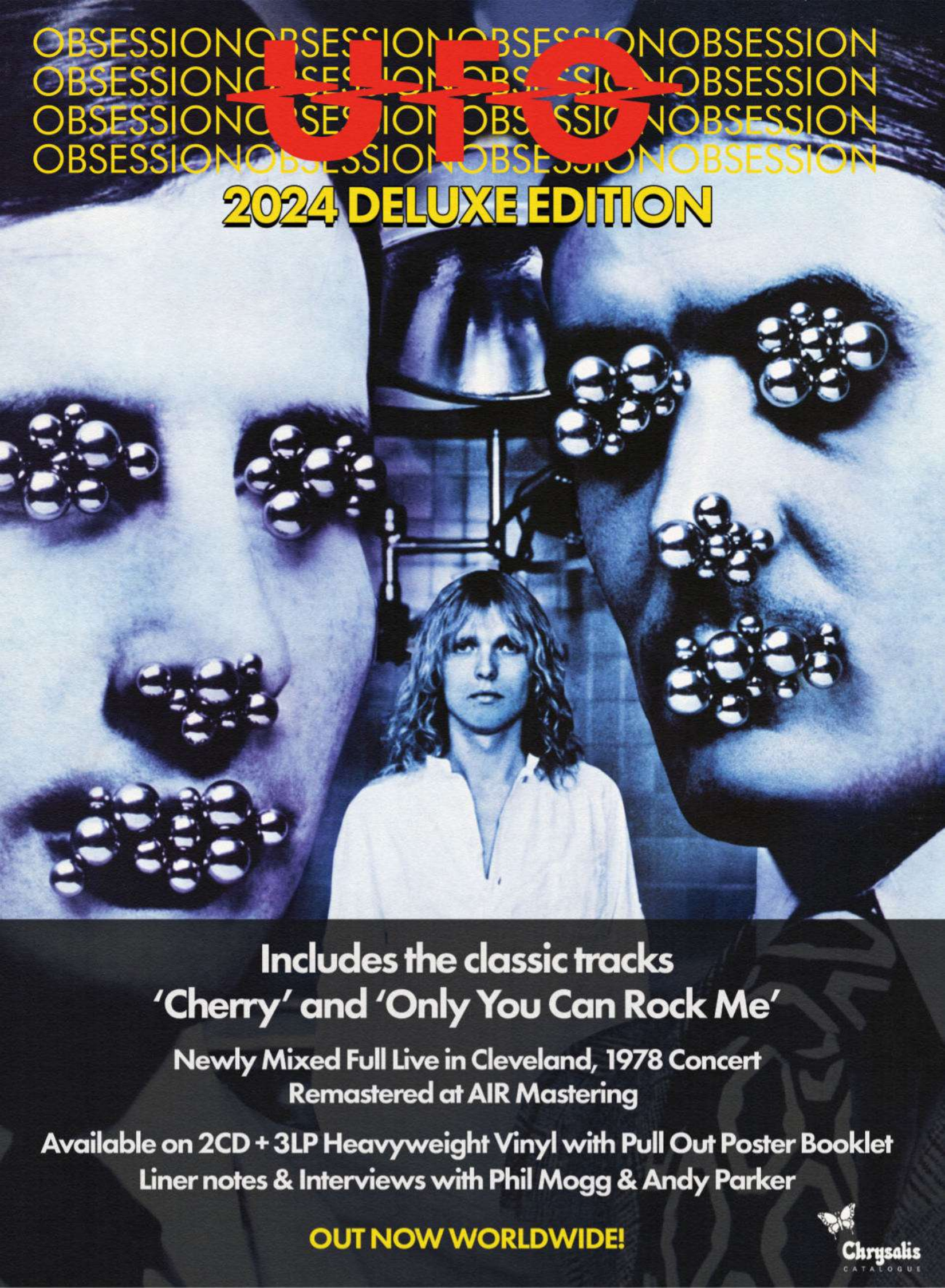
RUSH 50

"McCartney was trying to convince us to go back on the road"

GEDDY LEE & ALEX LIFESON
EXCLUSIVE NEW INTERVIEW

FUTURE
ISSUE 336

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"AN EIGHTIES WET DREAM... ALL THE INGREDIENTS ARE THERE, VERY WELL CRAFTED AND WELL PUT TOGETHER"

CHRIS MEE, FIREWORKS ROCK & METAL

THE THIRD FULL LENGTH ALBUM FROM CANDIAN ROCKERS FATAL VISION, ***THREE TIMES LUCKY,*** CONTINUES THEIR TRADEMARK MELODIC ROCK STYLE. FEATURES THE SINGLES 'GOODBYE', 'DANGEROUS' AND 'TIME OF OUR LIVES'. **AVAILABLE NOW!**

ALSO AVAILABLE:

ONCE – THE TOP 10 DEBUT ALBUM FEATURING 'INTO THE TWILIGHT', 'HEARTBREAKER' AND 'HAVEN'T WE BEEN HERE BEFORE?'

"Simply delicious"
Franck Leber, TVRockLive

TWICE – FEATURING 'IN MY FANTASY', 'GHOSTS OF YESTERDAY' AND 'WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE'.

"All the elements of melodic classic AOR rock come together"
Dimitris Politis, Rocktime

"THREE TIMES LUCKY IS A SWEEPING TRIUMPH, AN ALBUM THAT NOT ONLY HONOURS THE BAND'S MELODIC ROOTS BUT ALSO EXPANDS THEIR SONIC HORIZONS WITH GRACE AND POWER." - **Chris O'Connor, Rockposer.com**

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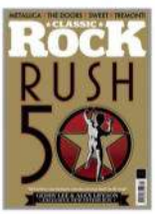
Happy New Year! Welcome to the first issue of 2025. (I can't believe I'm typing that!) And to kick off what we're hoping will be a very good year – and seriously, there's a shedload of excellent stuff to look forward to, just check out our preview over the next few pages – we collared Rush's Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson to look back over the last 50 years of their band, and find out just what they have planned to celebrate the occasion.

This issue we also revisit Metallica's *S&M* as it celebrates its silver jubilee, take a deep dive into the post-Jim Morrison albums of The Doors, sit down with Sweet's Andy Scott, hang out with Mark Tremonti, Andy Fairweather Low, Joe Satriani, DeWolff and so much more.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

PS. Given it's the time for New Year's resolutions, how about resolving to never miss an issue of *Classic Rock* in 2025? The easiest way to do that is to get a subscription – turn to page 76. You'll save money and score an exclusive gift!



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This month's contributors

PHILIP WILDING
In late 2023, writer, radio and podcast producer Philip could be seen and heard haranguing Geddy Lee's audience as the co-host of the British leg of the *My 'Effin Life* book tour. He recently sat down again with Geddy and Alex to talk R50, playing motels, the Taylor Hawkins tribute shows and the legacy of Neil Peart (p24). His third novel, *The Everything Room*, will be published in 2025.

DAVID WEST
Kung fu movies, Cozy Powell playing the drums, and Motörhead writing a song about the Ramones are just three of the things that bring David joy. His writing career has included six years covering MMA, facing the formidable Ginger Baker, and singing *Balls To The Wall* to Rammstein's Christoph Schneider. This month he grills DeWolff about their new *Muscle Shoals* record (p42).

HENRY YATES
Henry has written for *Classic Rock* for more years than he cares to admit! He has also written for titles including *The Guardian, Telegraph, NME, Guitarist, Total Guitar* and *Metal Hammer*, and interviewed rock stars from Lemmy to Liam Gallagher to Sheryl Crow. This issue, he put on his guitar hero hat to chat with Joe Satriani (p22) and Mark Tremonti (p52). For more, stop by yatescreativecopywriting.com

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INSIDE THE WORLD OF ROCK

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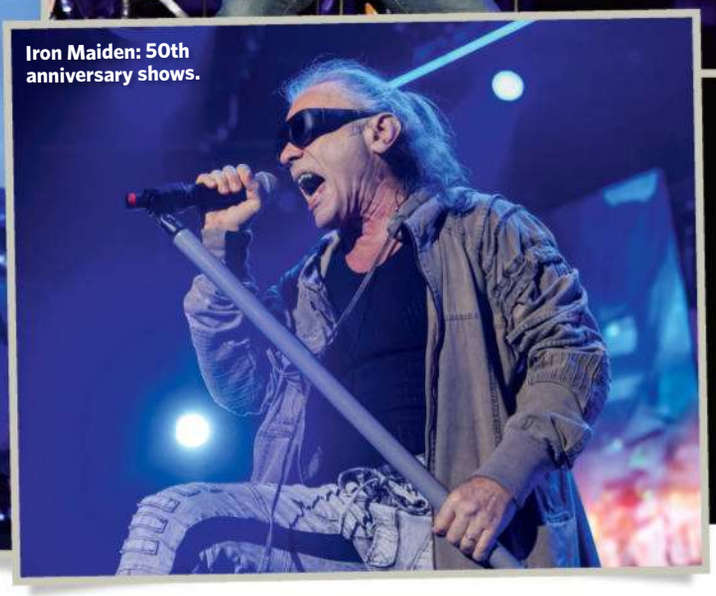
Bob Dylan biopic (starring Timothee Chalamet) in cinemas now.

Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend will "definitely do something" as The Who, and Daltrey plays solo shows.

Guns N' Roses: new album – cos Slash says so.



Iron Maiden: 50th anniversary shows.

25 THINGS WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2025

With a new year now upon us, here's what we're chomping at the bit for that's coming along in the next 12 months.

Words: **Dave Ling** and **Polly Glass**

BECOMING LED ZEPPELIN IS ON THE WAY!

Reports coming out of the US suggest that *Becoming Led Zeppelin*, the feature-length documentary about the origins of the band, will finally be released on IMAX screens in the US and Canada on February 7. With a run time of over two hours, it has a teaser trailer out now.

IRON MAIDEN KICK OFF THEIR RUN FOR YOUR LIVES TOUR!

Few bands do anniversaries quite as brilliantly as Iron Maiden, and with them celebrating their half-century it's no wonder they're promising their "most spectacular and elaborate show" to date for a run of arena nights in Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow, plus outdoor shows in Dublin and London. The tour will be the first without drummer Nicko McBrain, who announced his retirement from the band after 42 years last month.

KATE BUSH IS BACK... WE THINK!

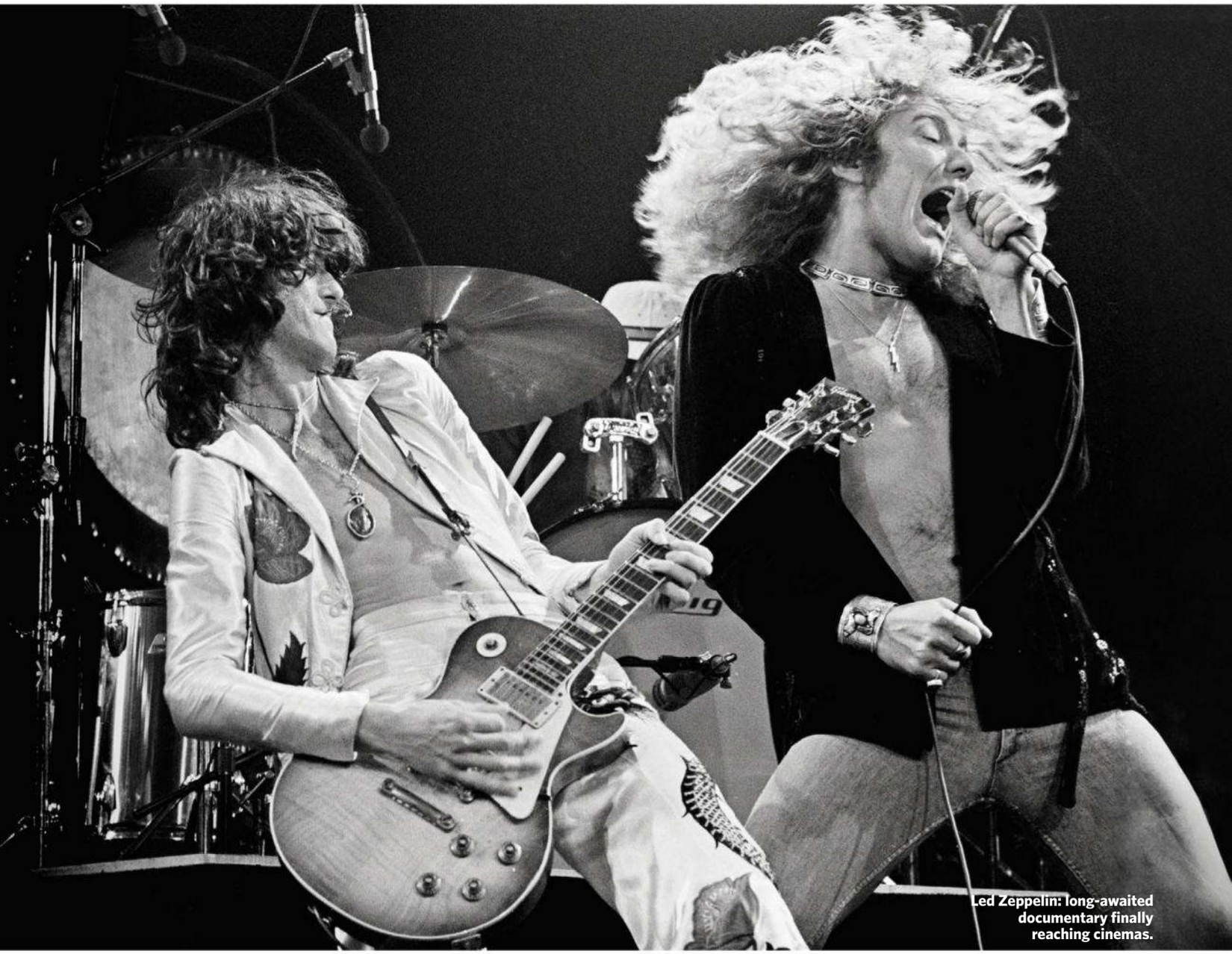
Having released the enchanting animated short film *Little Shrew (Snowflake)*, a lament for children impacted by war, made in collaboration with the charity War Child, Kate Bush has revealed plans to return to music, implying that a new album is on the cards. "I've got lots of ideas and I'm really looking forward to getting back into that creative space," she told the *Today* programme, "it's been a long time." Bush's most recent studio album, *50 Words For Snow*, was released in 2011.

DOWNLOAD LOOKS TO THE FUTURE!

With Green Day, Korn and Sleep Token confirmed

ROGER DALTREY: BRIAN RASKE/AU/PRESS GNR: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY; MAIDEN: DAVE SIMPSON/GETTY; TIMOTHEE CHALAMET: GOTHAM/GC IMAGES/GETTY

This issue The Dirt was compiled by Merlin Alderslade, Paul Brannigan, Jerry Ewing, Polly Glass, Rob Hughes, Emma Johnston, Stef Lach, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Will Simpson



Led Zeppelin: long-awaited documentary finally reaching cinemas.

as this year's top dogs, Download is wisely keeping one eye on the future. Too many of our established headline acts are retiring. Of course, the festival continues to present old favourites, with more than 90 other acts confirmed for 2025 as this issue went to press, including Weezer, Sex Pistols featuring Frank Carter, Airbourne, Steel Panther, Within Temptation, Eagles Of Death Metal, The Darkness and… er, McFly.

A SUMMER OF KILLER FESTIVAL BILLS!

As well as Download, there's more varied and glorious festival entertainment to be had elsewhere. Mastodon, Machine Head and Gojira will rule the roost at Bloodstock, while Michael Schenker's UFO Years and Black Stone Cherry are among the first names announced for Maid Of Stone. The Almighty, Sweet, D*A*D and Primal Fear are set for Stonedead, and W.A.S.P., The Wildhearts and Lita Ford will travel to Wales for Steelhouse.

Along with those there's Country 2 Country, Desertfest, Rebellion, ArcTanGent, Reading and Leeds, Firevolt and more, including…

TOOL'S NEW 'TROPICAL GETAWAY FESTIVAL' WITH PRIMUS, MASTODON, KING'S X AND MORE!

The world of heavy, highbrow progressive music gets a new five-star event in March, with prog-metal godfathers Tool announcing the first edition of Tool Live In The Sand. Taking place in the Dominican Republic on March 7–9, the event is designed to "bring Tool diehards from around the world for the ultimate vacation".

A-LIST REUNIONS, PLUS THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT RETURN!

Scott Gorham says he would love to put together an "absolute kick-ass [line-up of] Thin Lizzy" with a view to some summer touring. Considering that Gorham has previously tapped members of Def Leppard, GN'R, Aerosmith, Judas Priest, Europe and Mastodon, it would be well worth checking out.

Rumours of a Twisted Sister reunion have circulated over the past year, with Dee Snider suggesting "it's getting close", and whispers of Rush getting back together continue to surface…

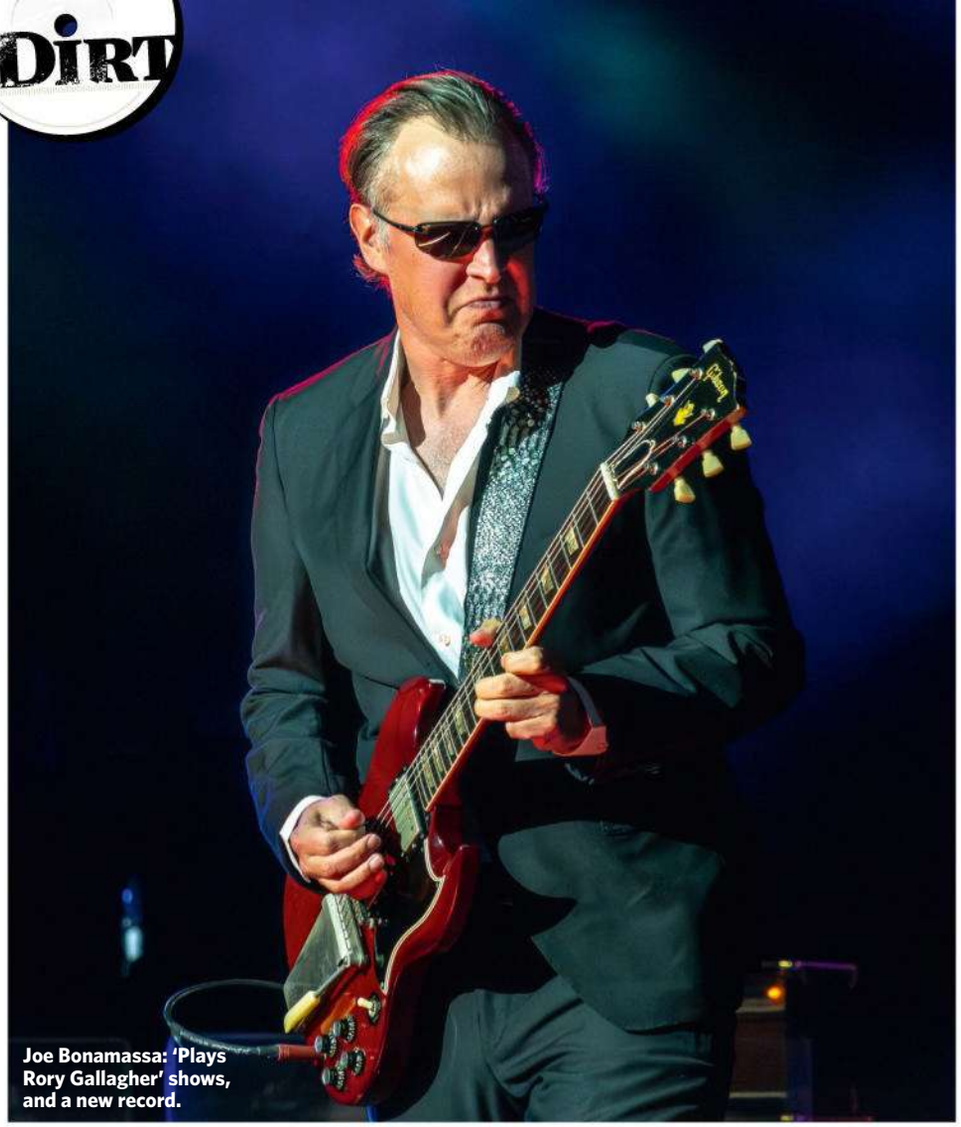
The Temperance Movement have announced their first tour (kicking off on March 17 in Bristol) since frontman Phil Campbell quit the band in January 2020 – and, as we go to press, it *looks* like Campbell is back at the mic. More as we hear it.

THE WHO WILL WORK TOGETHER IN 2025!

Keith Moon and John Entwistle are long gone, but Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey will reunite as The Who in 2025 – although unless Townshend gets his way it's unlikely they'll record a new album. "We're in good form. We love each other. We're both getting a bit creaky, but we will definitely do something next year," Townshend tells *The Standard*.

Meanwhile Daltrey has announced solo UK shows in April and May, where he'll play a mix of Who classics and solo material. ≫

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY



Joe Bonamassa: 'Plays Rory Gallagher' shows, and a new record.

STATUS QUO'S CELEBRATED *LIVE!* ALBUM GETS THE EXPANSION TREATMENT!

The Holy Grail for fans of Status Quo's 'Frantic Four' line-up is released in April. Following the rediscovery of the tapes of the band's run at Glasgow Apollo on the *Blue For You* tour in 1976, a new boxed set, *Status Quo Live – Super Deluxe Edition*, will present the full performances on all three nights.

JESSE MALIN RETURNS TO THE UK FOLLOWING HIS STROKE!

Hardcore punk-turned-Americana storyteller Jesse Malin will play two shows in May (at London's Islington Assembly Hall and The Garage), his first since suffering a rare spinal stroke in May 2023 that left him paralysed from the waist down. Proceeds will go towards his ongoing medical care.

PROG-METAL KINGPINS DREAM THEATER ARE BACK!

Dream Theater are back with their sixteenth studio album. *Parasomnia,* the first with returning drummer Mike Portnoy since 2009's *Black Clouds & Silver Linings*, is released on February 7.

LARKIN POE RAISE THE STAKES WITH NEW ALBUM AND BIGGEST UK SHOWS YET!

Getting 2025's album output off to a flying start, on January 24 Grammy-winning blues-rock sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell (aka the duo behind Nashville-based outfit Larkin Poe) release their most commanding album to date. We've had a sneak preview of *Bloom* (co-produced with Rebecca's husband Tyler Bryant), and for our money it's their best yet, full of riffs, rootsy warmth and on-point harmonies. Plus they're coming to the UK in October. Look out for a full feature on them in next month's issue.

STEVEN WILSON'S EIGHTH ALBUM, AND SOLO-CATALOGUE-SPANNING SHOWS!

Given that the solo maverick and Porcupine Tree mastermind isn't a fan of the word 'progressive', fans may be surprised to hear that his new album embraces the Pink Floyd-scale heights in his DNA. Comprising two long tracks and drawing on the idea of perspective (specifically Earth as seen from space) *The Overview* is a high-concept audio-visual epic, with a rockier streak than he's had in a while, accompanied by an immersive film. Expect all that, plus songs from last album *The Harmony Codex* and across his solo career, on a massive UK/Europe tour starting in May.

MORE NEW ALBUMS!

It's three years since Def Leppard's *Diamond Star Halos*, and there are whispers of new music from them. Elder statesmen Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton and Brian Wilson have all been busy, and new records are due from Blondie, Smith/Kotzen, Don Airey, Manic Street Preachers, The Wildhearts, Joe Bonamassa, The Darkness, Joanne Shaw Taylor, Garbage and Helloween, among many more. Mammoth, Halestorm, Samantha Fish, Shinedown, The Inspector Cluzo, Orianthi, Hellacopters and Anthrax are also expected to release new studio records during the year, and in the world of melodic rock, look out for newies from Europe, Tyketto, the Dan Reed Network, H.e.a.t. and Glenn Hughes. Tasty live albums include Iggy Pop's *Montreux Live* album, G3's *Reunion Live,* and many more are in the works.

AC/DC HIT THE ROAD AGAIN!

After a wealth of rumour-mongering and a 'leaked' Instagram post, AC/DC have now confirmed that they *will* hit the road in the United States this summer. They couldn't return to the UK so soon, could they? *Could they?!*

Beyond that, in terms of tours we'd *like* to see, it would be great if a British promoter took a chance on Sammy Hagar's top-grossing Best Of All Worlds tour with Michael Anthony, Joe Satriani and Kenny Aronoff. ZZ Top have extended their Elevation Tour, so one final lap of the UK, maybe? And how about an appearance from the reunited Slayer on these shores?

GHOST'S BIGGEST EVER WORLD TOUR!

Ghost's quest to take over the globe continues in 2025 as the Grammy-winning Swedish theatrical rockers embark on a mammoth bout of touring that includes four arena shows in the UK (see Tours, page 93) and their first ever show at New York's iconic Madison Square Garden.

MORE GREAT TOURS!

One of the joys of classic rock is the breadth of its appeal. In 2025 there'll be something for just about everyone, including Joe Bonamassa playing his Rory Gallagher set, the return of Blue Öyster Cult, Uriah Heep's 'final' tour, and tour dates for Saxon, Fish, Bruce Springsteen, Roger Daltrey, Bonnie Raitt, Hawkwind, Queensrÿche, Soul Asylum, Limp Bizkit, Toto, Robin Trower, Public Image Ltd, The Darkness, The Pogues, Levellers, Bryan Adams, Skunk Anansie and Phil Campbell's 50th-anniversary celebration of Motörhead. Guns N' Roses have also announced a summer European jaunt (including two UK dates with Rival Sons as support).

ALBUMS WE'D *LIKE* TO SEE – IS 2025 THE YEAR FOR GN'R?!

Dare we even mention Guns N' Roses? Year after year we cross our fingers and hope for something. But with Slash having revealed that "Guns N' Roses are trying to make a record", the hope and expectation is beginning to escalate.

Following a rapturously received five-date UK tour by Paul Cook, Steve Jones and Glen Matlock plus singer Frank Carter, it's tempting to consider the possibility of a new Sex Pistols-ish album. With the liaison between the four going from strength to strength, there has to be a possibility.

Ricky Warwick has always batted away questions about a new album from The Almighty with the trusted response 'never say never'. By the time you read this, the band will have completed a second reunion tour, and with summer festivals to be announced, the thought of a new record from the classic line-up (their first since 1991's *Soul Destruction*) can't be written off.

NEW AND UP-AND-COMING BANDS!

Following some mega shows in 2024, Welsh heroes Those Damn Crows will release their next

JOE BONAMASSA: MARTY MOFFATT/PRESS

Jeff Lynne's ELO: their last ever show, in London's Hyde Park.

Larkin Poe: new album, and biggest UK shows yet.

Steven Wilson: new album and big tour.

album, *God Shaped Hole*, in April. Rising power-pop/punk stars Bad Nerves head out on tour with Green Day and Weezer, while psychedelic maverick Rosalie Cunningham tours her latest LP *To Shoot Another Day*, and Shaman's Harvest and Blacktop Mojo play their first UK shows. The Cold Stares' frontman Chris Tapp has a solo album, *Green*, on the way, Aussie NWOBHM-esque oddballs Battlesnake have hinted at a new record (they're confirmed for Download), and The Damn Truth, Troy Redfern and Robert Jon & The Wreck all have new albums coming. Plus we've got our eye on fresh faces including Gyasi, Himalayas, Last Train, the Zac Schulze Gang, Dirty Blonde, Matted, Jonathan Hultén, Morganway and Split Dogs, to name a few. Check out more in this month's Hot List on p66.

CLUTCH CELEBRATE THEIR 30TH ANNIVERSARY!

At the end of the year, celebrating 30 years since the release of their self-titled second album, Clutch will be playing it in its entirety on a five-date tour that ends on December 20 in London. Look out also for a rather sexy reissue of the record on 180-gram vinyl.

OTHER LANDMARK ANNIVERSARIES!

Anniversaries are a great excuse for putting out appetising reissues and box sets and doing special tours, and there are some big milestones being hit in 2025. Motörhead, Iron Maiden, Jefferson Starship and Steel Pulse all have 50th-anniversary events planned, and others also hitting the 50-year mark (without any plans announced as we went to press) include Saxon, Boston, Sex Pistols, The Runaways, Krokus and Talking Heads.

Rockers celebrating 40 years include Guns N' Roses, Dream Theater, Mike + The Mechanics, Simply Red, Helloween, Extreme, Crowded House and more. New Model Army celebrate their 45th birthday as a band with *LIVE SO36* (a live record captured in Berlin in 2023), and in the world of 21st-century stars Alter Bridge will release a 20th-anniversary edition of their debut *One Day Remains*.

Hitting the big 60, though? That'll include some of *Classic Rock*'s ultimate 60s-spawned pioneers, among them Pink Floyd, The Doors, Scorpions, Canned Heat, Love, The Seeds and The Grateful Dead. Sixty years? When the hell did that happen?!

ELO'S LAST EVER SHOW, AT LONDON'S HYDE PARK IN JULY!

Jeff Lynne will be hoping for the real Mr Blue Sky when his latest incarnation of the Electric Light Orchestra play for the final time, in London's Hyde Park on July 13. Demand for tickets was such that shows in Birmingham and Manchester were added to the itinerary. Give that Lynne's return to touring took place at Hyde Park in 2014, "it seems like the perfect place to do our final show", he says.

BOB DYLAN AND KEITH MOON BIOPICS!

We're not sure whether to be excited or deeply suspicious of this (Timothée Chalamet in the titular role? Really?), but either way it's an interesting prospect for Dylan fans. Centred on the pioneering folk troubadour's move to amplified electric instrumentation, *A Complete Unknown* is in cinemas now.

And could this year see the release of the Keith Moon biopic, tentatively titled *The Real Me*, which has been in the works since 2022? Again, watch this space.

'OFFICIAL' FLEETWOOD MAC DOCUMENTARY COMING!

An officially sanctioned Fleetwood Mac film, as yet untitled, is due out this year. The documentary is being directed by Frank Marshall, whose previous credits include similar projects on the Bee Gees, the Beach Boys and Carole King & James Taylor, and will include previously unseen footage as well as new interviews with the surviving band members.

AND FINALLY, "THIS ONE GOES TO ELEVEN"!

Four decades after its original release, the classic mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap* finally gets a long-awaited sequel in the spring. The original band – lead singer David St Hubbins (Michael McKean), lead guitarist Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest) and bassist Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer) – will be joined by a cast that includes Paul McCartney, Elton John and Garth Brooks. And yes, it's in bloody Dobly.

ELO: KEVIN NIXON; LARKIN POE: ROBBY KLEIN/PRESS; STEVEN WILSON: HAJO MUELLER/PRESS

RIP

Thank you...
and good night.

Vic Flick
May 14, 1937 – November 14, 2024

Born in Surrey, Vic Flick played guitar on two of the most famous pieces of music of the modern age: *It's Not Unusual* by Tom Jones in 1965 and, three years earlier, the James Bond theme song. The 87-year-old, who had been battling Alzheimer's, also played with Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, The Walker Brothers, Bee Gees and Cliff Richard.

Jim Gaines
October 2, 1941 – November 9, 2024

Walter Trout has paid tribute to the multiple-Grammy-winning music producer and engineer whose credits include Carlos Santana, Journey, Huey Lewis & The News, Steve Miller, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Dionne Warwick. Arkansas native Jim Gaines passed away peacefully in his sleep at 83. "I had the amazing experience of making three studio records and two live albums with Jim," Trout wrote in a social media post. "Jim is gone and I have a broken heart. I will miss you, my friend."

Bob Bray
December 30, 1979 – November 2024

My Chemical Romance have issued a statement after the death of their former drummer at just 44 years old, saying he was an "important part" of the history of the New Jersey-based pop-punk band. Bray joined them in 2004 and played on their most successful album, *The Black Parade*. After leaving the group in 2010 he retired from music. Cause of death has not been released.

Colin Petersen
March 24, 1946 – November 18, 2024

The Bee Gees family is mourning not one but two drummers after they passed away less than a week part. Born in Australia, Colin 'Smiley' Petersen played on their first four albums before departing in August 1969 following a dispute with manager Robert Stigwood. Petersen was 78 years old.

Dennis Byron
April 14, 1949 – November 14, 2024

Cardiff-born David Bryon was the drummer with the Bee Gees from 1973 until their *Saturday Night Fever*-era heyday, having joined the group from Amen Corner. He also worked with Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Marriott, Kenny Rogers, Barbra Streisand and Dave Edmunds among others. Byron was 75 years old when he died in Nashville.

Shel Talmy

August 11, 1937 – November 13, 2024

Shel Talmy, the American record producer behind hits for The Kinks, The Who, The Easybeats and more, wrote a message that was to be circulated in the event of his demise. Beginning with the words: "If you're reading this now, this is my final vignette," it said he looked forward to working in a "big studio in the sky". The message concluded: "I've had a good run, and I am delighted it lasted as long as it did. I'm also delighted that I am told I have a legacy that will last even longer." Talmy was 87 when he passed away peacefully at home after suffering a stroke.

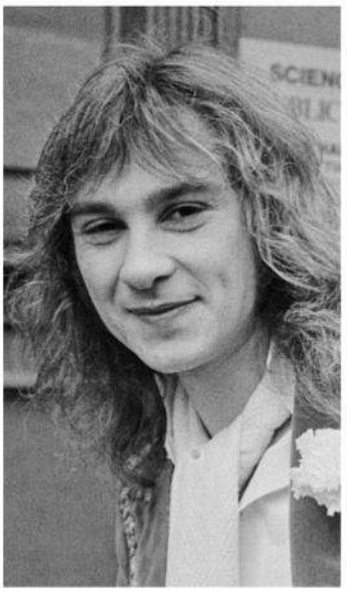
Chicago-born Sheldon Talmy first came to Britain in 1962, supposedly for a five-week holiday, and went on to work on a series of iconic hit singles that included, among many others, *You Really Got Me* by The Kinks, The Who's *My Generation* and The Easybeats' *Friday On My Mind*. He also collaborated with David Bowie, Roy Harper, Manfred Mann, The Damned, Amen Corner, The Small Faces, Pentagle and Lemmy's early band the Rockin' Vickers.

Dave Davies of The Kinks wrote on X: "I really loved the man. He was really crucial to the beginning of our career. Shel was a really sweet soul. All my love and condolence to his family."

"Shel was a good friend and ranks in the top ten most important producers in rock history," said Little Steven. "He should've been in the Rock Hall years ago." **DL**

Pete Sinfield

December 27, 1943 – November 14, 2024



King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp announced the death at the age of 80 of lyricist and producer Pete Sinfield, writing on X: "Peter Sinfield, King Crimson's original roadie, lyricist, lights operator and live sound engineer passed away yesterday."

Emerson Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer wrote: "Peter will be sadly missed. A great person to be with and very funny. We were with him at his home about 18 months ago and we talked and talked all afternoon."

Sinfield was a major part of King Crimson until 1972, notably giving the group their name and sourcing Barry Godber's eye-catching artwork for the sleeve of their groundbreaking 1969 debut album *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. Later Sinfield produced Roxy Music's self-titled debut album and its hit single *Virginia Plain*. He wrote the lyrics for Greg Lake's perennial hit *I Believe In Father Christmas*.

Sinfield co-produced the first four King Crimson albums between 1969 and 1971 – *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, *Lizard* and *Islands* – and wrote the band's lyrics. He famously said of his role in Crimson: "I became their pet hippie, because I could tell them where to go to buy the funny clothes that they saw everyone wearing." Fripp asked him to leave the band in January 1972.

Later in life he would write pop hits for a wide range of artists including Buck's Fizz, Agnetha Fältskog, Cher, Five Star and Celine Dion. In recent years, with his health declining, Sinfield had retired to the Suffolk coastal town of Aldeburgh. **JE**

Mike Pinera

September 29, 1948 – November 20, 2024

Although best known as a guitarist for Iron Butterfly over several different spells in the 70s, 80s and 90s, and also for being among the first guitarists to use the 'talk box' effect, Mike Pinera was also a member of Florida band Blues Image, and went on to work with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. During the 80s Pinera played with the Alice Cooper band, appearing on the albums *Special Forces* and *Zipper Catches Skin*. Along with the Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell, he formed Ramatam, whose self-titled album was produced by Tom Dowd, but left the band before they recorded the follow-up. Pinera was also a founding member of Cactus spin-off New Cactus, and released the solo albums *Isla* and *Forever* in 1977 and '79. His Top 10 song *Ride Captain Ride*, recorded with Blues Image,is still heard on classic rock radio. Pinera was 76 years old when he died of liver failure. **DL**

SHEL TALMY: TPJP/GETTY; PETER SINFIELD: EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY; MIKE PINERA: SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY

Stood n Seagulls
30 JAN NORWICH THE WATERFRONT
31 JAN LONDON UNDERWORLD
1 FEB LINCOLN DRILL HALL
2 FEB NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY
4 FEB GLASGOW ORAN MOR
5 FEB MANCHESTER ACADEMY
6 FEB LEEDS BRUDENELL
7 FEB NOTTINGHAM METRONOME
8 FEB MILTON KEYNES CRAUFURD
9 FEB SOUTHAMPTON ENGINE ROOMS
11 FEB BRISTOL THE FLEECE
12 FEB CARDIFF THE GLOBE
13 FEB CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS

PLANET ROCK
Blues POWER LIVE
PRESENTS
ROBIN TROWER
MAY 2025
WEDNESDAY 14TH MAY
BUXTON OPERA HOUSE
THURSDAY 15TH MAY
GLASGOW ORAN - MOR
SATURDAY 17TH MAY
HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
SUNDAY 18TH MAY
BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL
TUESDAY 20TH MAY
FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
WEDNESDAY 21ST MAY
O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE LONDON

THE GIG CARTEL PRESENTS
AN ACOUSTIC EVENING WITH
FM
MARCH 2025
08.03 YORK FULFORD ARMS
09.03 SHEFFIELD GREYSTONES
14.03 NORWICH WATERFRONT STUDIO
15.03 HUDDERSFIELD THE PARISH
16.03 LEEK FOXLOWE ARTS CENTRE
28.03 MILTON KEYNES CRAUFURD ARMS
29.03 FROME THE TREEHOUSE
30.03 SHOREHAM ROPETACKLE

THE GIG CARTEL
PRESENTS
BLUESROCK'S RESILIENT ICON
WALTER TROUT
TUE 06 MAY | WARWICK ARTS CENTRE
WED 07 MAY | CARDIFF TRAMSHED
THU 08 MAY | SOUTHAMPTON THE 1865
FRI 09 MAY | EXETER PHOENIX
SAT 10 MAY | CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION
SUN 11 MAY | BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
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terrorvision
we are still not robots
Friday 7 March Chester Live Rooms
Saturday 8 March Leicester O, Academy2
Thursday 20 March Cambridge Junction
Saturday 22 March Oxford O, Academy2
+ SCARLET REBELS

THE GIG CARTEL BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE MAIN THING
ROBERT JON & THE WRECK
WEDNESDAY 23 APRIL GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
FRIDAY 25 APRIL CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS
SUNDAY 27 APRIL HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
ROBERTJONANDTHEWRECK.COM

THE GIG CARTEL PRESENTS
MIKE DAWES
2025 TOUR
25 MARCH | GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
26 MARCH | EXETER PHOENIX
27 MARCH | LONDON BUSH HALL
29 MARCH | LEEK FOXLOWE ARTS
30 MARCH | MANCHESTER BAND ON THE WALL
01 APRIL | NEWCASTLE CLUNY
02 APRIL | GLASGOW ORAN-MOR
03 APRIL | SHEFFIELD GREYSTONES
04 APRIL | CLITHEROE THE GRAND

PLANET ROCK
Blues POWER
ROBBEN FORD
GUITAR DOJO
ROBB FORD
MAY 8 | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
MAY 9 | HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
MAY 10 | SUNDERLAND OLD FIRE STATION
MAY 11 | GLASGOW ORAN MOR
+SPECIAL GUEST
LAURA EVANS
2025
PLANET ROCK

Jeff Beck's Guitars Up For Auction

"They needed to be shared, played and loved again."

The guitar collection of the late Jeff Beck is set to go under the hammer in January. Ninety of Beck's instruments, played during his six-decade-long career, along with amps, effects pedals and 'tools of the trade' will be auctioned at Christie's in London on January 22.

Beck's wife Sandra Cash says: "These guitars were his great love, and almost two years after his passing it's time to part with them, as Jeff wished. After some hard thinking, I decided they needed to be shared, played, and loved again."

Beck's celebrated 1954 'Oxblood' Les Paul is estimated to fetch up to £500,000. Amelia Walker, head of Private And Iconic Collections at Christie's, describes the guitar as "a really beautiful instrument, covered in grime and dust and signs of use".

"I think it's part of the appeal. The indents of his fingernails are on the fret boards. He played them hard. He didn't see them as precious works of art, they were his tools to ply his trade with." **PB**

Jeff Beck: 90 guitars to go under the hammer.

Lemmy Visits Stringfellows – For Good

Motörhead leader's ashes to be stored at strip club.

In August last year, a convoy of 55 Harley-Davidson motorcycles delivered a bust containing some of late Motörhead frontman Lemmy's ashes to Rock City in Nottingham. Now, iconic London strip club Stringfellows – set up by the late Peter Stringfellow in 1980 – where Lemmy was a regular visitor, is to be the permanent home to more, stored in an urn in the shape of Lemmy's trademark cavalry hat.

In 2016, *The Hollywood Times* asked Lemmy where he enjoyed spending time when he wasn't on tour. "Stringfellows in London," he replied. "It's a high-end strip club. There's a big welcome there always. I've known the owner, Peter, since 1964."

"Stringfellows always held a special place in Lemmy's heart," explains Motörhead manager Todd Singerman. "He loved the rock'n'roll spirit Peter brought to the club, he loved the relaxed environment, and he certainly loved the view." **FL**

NEWS

Poison seem set to reunite in 2026, with their best-loved line-up of Bret Michaels, Bobby Dall, CC DeVille and Rikki Rockett all on board. The American hair-rockers last toured in 2022.

Iron Maiden guitarist **Adrian Smith** and Winery Dogs guitarist/singer **Richie Kotzen** release their second collaborative album on March 7. *Black Light/White Noise* includes 10 all-new Smith/Kotzen tracks and was self-produced, with Jay Ruston (Anthrax, Uriah Heep) handling the mix.

Artificial intelligence pioneer ElevenLabs have collaborated with the estate of **Jerry Garcia** to recreate the late Grateful Dead singer/guitarist's voice for a series of audiobooks, articles, poetry, bedtime stories and recipes, delivered in 32 languages.

Bruce Springsteen denies speculation, including a report in *Forbes* in July, that he has a billion dollars in the bank, despite having sold his masters and publishing rights in 2021. "I'm not a billionaire," he tells *The Telegraph*. "I wish I was, but they [*Forbes*] got that real wrong."

Rod Stewart (pictured) is to play the prestigious legend slot at this summer's Glastonbury Festival. The singer will perform on the Pyramid Stage on June 29. He says: "After all these years, I'm proud and ready and more than able to take the stage again to pleasure and titillate my friends at Glastonbury."

WELCOME BACK

Night Flight Orchestra

On paper their mixture of genres shouldn't work, but on record and live it's like living in a movie.

Conceived in 2007 as a crackpot dream by two members of the Swedish melodic death metal band Soilwork – frontman Björn 'Speed' Strid and guitarist David Andersson – Night Flight Orchestra set out to make music that belonged in an episode of *Miami Vice*. Previewing their seventh album, *Give Us The Moon*, Strid explains why the band felt compelled to continue after Andersson's passing in 2022.

At your shows you get audiences joyously spiralling around the venue in a conga line.
It's not something you see very often at a rock concert, is it? It began spontaneously years ago when I talked on stage about a conga train, and now it happens at every show. People really enjoy it.

> **"There's some nostalgia, but we're not a pure nostalgia act."**

***Give Us The Moon* is the band's first record since David Andersson passed away.**
Nobody knew what to expect without David. Would it feel wrong? But it's something I had discussed with him on his deathbed, and he said: "Yeah, you should definitely continue." We wanted to turn this into something positive and uplifting. Quite quickly we felt that David was very present. We could almost see him walking in the corridors with a beer, wearing only his underwear. That's how he always recorded his solos. I don't think we could have done a better job, and I really hope that somehow David can hear what we did.

For those unaware, the NFO blueprint is a glossy, multi-coloured fusion of classic hard rock and AOR, plus the all-important X Factor: kitsch US disco. It's crazy, but it works.
We are influenced by so much good stuff. You'll hear Giorgio Moroder-type dance rhythms, but there's also some Jeff Lynne and ELO in there as well.

The press handout describes this album as the most cinematic NFO release so far.
I can really hear so many of our songs in a movie format, and sometimes I get so frustrated when I see great scenes and the music is quite bad. It makes me wonder how on earth do we get to these people [film producers]? This album really takes the listener on a journey; close your eyes and it builds pictures in your head.

If someone thought of NFO as a novelty act, would that bother you?
Not really. ABBA were slagged off for being a happy disco band, but they were so much more multi-layered. With our band there's some nostalgia, but we're not a pure nostalgia act. You can recognise a lot of references in us, from Kiss and Foreigner to the Alan Parsons Project, but I think we're multi-layered, too.

In 2023 NFO opened for Kiss. Given that your sound is partially indebted to that band's two 'disco' albums, *Dynasty* and *Unmasked*, how did their audience respond to you?
I didn't expect such a really good reaction. People were dancing. Gene Simmons came into our dressing room, and on the second night so did Paul [Stanley]. Doc McGhee Kiss's manager] told us he liked the band.

NFO have also appeared at Wacken Open Air, the German metal festival.
We were well received there too. To be honest, I've expected a lot of criticism from the metalhead community, but it just hasn't come. I think people get that we are sincere, and it's a weirdly unifying factor, like a social experience. **DL**

Give Us The Moon is available via Napalm Records. NFO play London The Garage on February 1.

THE NIGHT FLIGHT ORCHESTRA: LINDA FLORIN/PRESS; JEFF BECK: MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY; ROD STEWART: GUS STEWART/GETTY

HIGH HOPES

Lions In The Street

A debut album that's like the Stones at their peak? There's satisfaction to be got from that.

They might be in our High Hopes section, but there have been times when things looked truly hopeless for louche Stones/Crowes-inspired blues rockers Lions In The Street. The tale of this Canadian quartet is a saga of grubby industry politics, years in the wilderness, life-threatening illness and, finally, what looks like a happy ending. All that and they've only just released their debut album.

It all began when the band signed with TVT Records back in 2002. "They were the fourth-biggest label in the world at the time," remembers frontman/guitarist Chris Kinnon. "TVT had a bit of a reputation. But it was a record deal! And it was a disaster from the beginning."

The problem was the identity of the band. TVT had it in their head that Lions were the new Nickelback. There was a long search to find the right producer. "It took two or three years and we tested with all these guys," says Kinnon. "Finally made some recordings in LA with Dave Cobb that sounded good.

"Then we're back to the dispute about who the band is. The label started playing games – we were supposed to record in this studio Long View in Massachusetts, and as Canadians we needed visas. But the record company didn't renew the visas."

After three years it became clear that TVT would never put the record out. The band hired a lawyer to extract them from the deal, and TVT played hardball. But without a record, or any reputation, Lions had no leverage.

The band never split up as such, but things slowed down. They all got day jobs – Kinnon ended up as a sanitation worker. Then things got much worse when in 2017 he was diagnosed with kidney cancer. "I had no family history of it, but I think it was environmental," he says. "At the time, I worked in the transfer station and I was exposed to all kinds of toxins like asbestos. But I was lucky. They caught it early. I found a world-class surgeon who removed it, and I've been in remission now for seven years."

Meanwhile, the advent of streaming meant that Lions didn't need a record deal to release music. So they re-recorded some tracks, remixed others, and the result is *Moving Along*. It really was worth the long wait – a swaggering but tender rock record that's the best album the Stones haven't made in 30 years.

Kinnon no longer harbours dreams of rock stardom. "We just want to be able to have an audience of people who like it as much as we like it." But what if *Moving Along* gets the traction it deserves and the industry comes calling again?

"I don't think labels sign big deals like they used to," he says, waving away the idea, "so I don't think it will happen. We'll just put the music out and see where it lands." **WS**

Moving Along is available now via Cargo Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"Everyone compares us to *Exile On Main St.*, but I love *Sticky Fingers* just because it's a little more brash, in my mind," says Chris Kinnon says of two Rolling Stones albums. "It's a little bit closer to punk rock; I can trace that line from *Sticky Fingers* to the first Clash record. Also it has that whole acoustic side of it, which I love."

GREGORY CROWE/PRESS

"I was exposed to all kinds of toxins like asbestos. But I was lucky, they caught it early."

Hagar Holds Out Olive Branch To Alex Van Halen

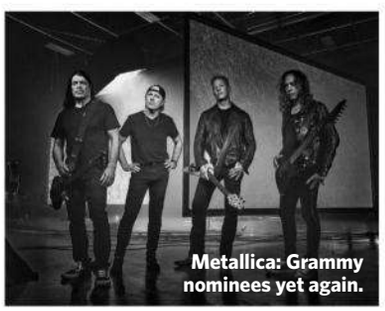
"I just want to be friends again," says Sammy.

Sammy Hagar has vowed to end the feud with his former Van Halen bandmate Alex Van Halen, insisting: "I just want to be friends again."

Red Rocker Hagar enjoyed two spells as frontman with Van Halen, but he and drummer Alex have not spoken to each other in years. In fact the drummer barely mentioned Hagar in his recent autobiography, *Brother*, and insists that the spiritual part of Van Halen died when original frontman David Lee Roth first walked away from the band in 1985.

Now Hagar tells *Rolling Stone*: "It's sad. I haven't read the whole book, but I've seen all the excerpts, and I heard some of the interviews. [The situation] breaks my heart.

"It's on my bucket list that I will not take this to my grave," he adds. "I've put the olive branch out there many times. I don't want to play in a band again with Al. I'm not asking for that. I can see that he's incapable of doing it. I just want to be friends again." **SL/FL**



Metallica: Grammy nominees yet again.

Grammys 2025 Nominees

Metallica, Judas Priest, Pearl Jam and Idles on the lists.

Metallica and Judas Priest are among the bands nominated for the 2025 Grammy awards. Metallica head things up in the Best Metal Performance category with *Screaming Suicide*, from 2023's album *72 Seasons*. Priest's *Crown Of Horns*, from *Invincible Shield*, is also nominated in the same category, as are modern metalcore heavyweights Spiritbox and Gojira.

Nominees in the Rock categories include The Black Keys, Green Day, Pearl Jam and Idles, with The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, St Vincent and Fontaines D.C. Fontaines D.C. and St. Vincent are also nominees in Best Alternative categories, as are Cage The Elephant, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Kim Gordon, Brittany Howard and Clairo. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross also received a nomination in the Best Score Soundtrack For Visual Media Category for their thumping soundtrack to this year's tennis blockbuster *Challengers*.

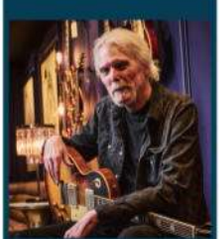
All the winners will be revealed at a ceremony in LA on February 2. **MA**

NEWS

Art-rock duo **Godley & Crème** (Kevin Godley and Lol Crème, formerly half of the Manchester pop-prog quartet 10cc), are the subject of an 11-disc career-spanning box set released on February 28 via Edsel Records. *Parts Of The Process – The Complete Godley & Creme*, includes two bonus discs of non-album tracks, seven-inch single versions and extended mixes.

Elton John is yet to regain full vision after suffering an infection back in the summer. "I am healing, but it's an extremely slow process and it will take some time before sight returns to the impacted eye," Sir Elton said recently. "I am feeling positive about the progress I have made so far."

A super-deluxe edition of **Genesis**'s 1974 double album *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* is released on March 28 via Rhino. Available on five vinyl LPs and a Blu-ray, four CDs and Blu-ray, and in digital form, its expansive bonus features include three never-before-released demos from the sessions, and a Dolby ATMOS mix overseen by Peter Gabriel and Tony Banks.



Scott Gorham (pictured) has named three musicians that he would like to join him in a rebooted **Thin Lizzy**. He cited fellow guitarists Vivian Campbell from Def Leppard and Guns N' Roses' Richard Fortus, and bassist Marco Mendoza. "There's a ton of guys out there," Gorham said, "the problem is that they all have day jobs."

WELCOME BACK

Benjamin Booker

He's back with a compelling, experimental new album, and enjoying pulling the strings on his own label.

It's been a long break since his last album, bluesy garage rocker *Witness*, but Benjamin Booker is back with *Lower*, this time experimenting in noise rock and contemporary indie hip-hop – and some weighty subject matter. Now the proud head of his own label, he's enjoying a new level of artistic freedom.

It's seven years since your last record. What have you been doing?
I was just working on music. I had a specific idea of what I wanted to do for this record, so it was really just about following through and getting there. I spent a couple years trying to figure out what I wanted to do. It was different to other things that I've done, because there was a clear vision of what I wanted, and it wasn't easy for me to get to.

"I had wanted to incorporate pornography into a song."

What was that vision?
I've been listening to eighties UK indie stuff, noise pop, stuff like My Bloody Valentine, The Cure and Jesus And Mary Chain. And I was listening to a lot of indie hip-hop and ambient music from today, and just trying to figure out how to put all of these things together in a cohesive way.

How do you even begin to bring that sort of stuff together?
I started painting more and getting more into visual art, and learning more about art history, which made me think a lot more about music history. So I spent a lot of time studying the history of recording, which is so short, but just seeing what people had done with hip-hop and what things hadn't been done in hip-hop – you don't really hear distortion in hip-hop music.

What were you influenced by lyrically?
I was reading *Book Of Longing* by Leonard Cohen. I liked the simplicity of the poems, but how they felt so spiritual, there was a depth to them. And I'm a very big Dylan fan. Those people use a lot of biblical allusions in their work, and my song *LWA In The Trailer Park* is referencing Haitian voodoo. Every song, I was trying to write about something that I didn't think had really been written about before. But also, there's songs like *Rebecca Latimer Felton Takes A BBC*, which is referencing pornography and slavery.

Rebecca Latimer Felton was the first woman to serve in the United States Senate, and was pro-slavery and pro-lynching. Why did you want to reference her?
I had been reading about Jeremy O. Harris, this playwright who has a play called Slave Play, which examines slavery and interracial relationships and sex. I like to look through Library Of Congress catalogues, so I was learning about her, I was thinking about Jeremy O. Harris. I had wanted to incorporate pornography into a song. And they all came together.

The song *Same Kind Of Lonely* is genuinely disturbing. Where is the audio clip of shooting from?
It's from a school shooting. The clip is this violent thing that kind of hits you in the music. But that's how those things hit us in real life. They just come out of nowhere.

This is your first record on your own label. How do you find being a label boss?
I love it. There's things that I'm doing now, where I would say it to people at labels and they would literally laugh in my face. I don't even have to have those discussions any more. It's just done, no questions. **EJ**

Lower is out on January 24 via Fire Next Time Records.

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14 APR THE LOWTHER PAVILION / LYTHAM ST ANNES SOLD OUT
16 APR VENUE CYMRU / LLANDUDNO LOW AVAILABILITY
17 APR THEATRE SEVERN / SHREWSBURY SOLD OUT
19 APR WARRINGTON PARR HALL / WARRINGTON
20 APR THE APEX / BURY ST EDMUNDS SOLD OUT
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29 APR OPERA HOUSE / BUXTON SOLD OUT
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11 MAY PLAYHOUSE WHITLEY BAY / WHITLEY BAY LOW AVAILABILITY
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25 MAY TOWN HALL / CHELTENHAM
28 MAY G LIVE / GUILDFORD
30 MAY GWYN HALL / NEATH SOLD OUT
31 MAY CORN EXCHANGE NEWBURY / NEWBURY SOLD OUT
01 JUN ORCHARD THEATRE / DARTFORD
03 JUN LEAS CLIFF HALL / FOLKESTONE
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29 SEP CHELMSFORD / THEATRE
01 OCT IPSWICH / CORN EXCHANGE
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06 OCT CAMBRIDGE / CORN EXCHANGE
08 OCT KINGS LYNN / CORN EXCHANGE
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29 OCT BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
31 OCT ALDERSHOT / PRINCES HALL
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03 NOV RUNCORN / BRINDLEY THEATRE
04 NOV HEREFORD / COURTYARD
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FRI 14 LIVERPOOL GUILD OF STUDENTS
SAT 15 WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC HALL
MON 17 YORK BARBICAN SOLD OUT
TUE 18 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
THU 20 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
FRI 21 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL
SAT 22 MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO SOLD OUT
MON 24 BRISTOL BEACON SOLD OUT
TUE 25 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
THU 27 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
FRI 28 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE SOLD OUT
SAT 29 LONDON OVO ARENA WEMBLEY

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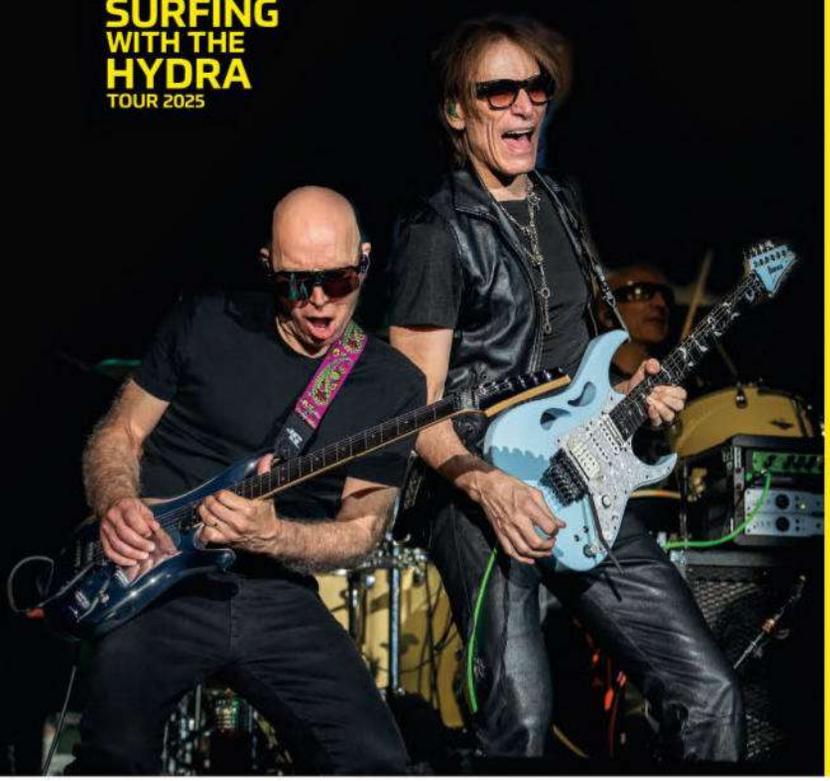

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14.06 LONDON
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"Fighters almost always have a story, and every songwriter is looking for one."

HIGH HOPES

Stephen Wilson Jr

Inspired by his late father, the songwriter-for-hire is now telling his stories with his own voice.

By any standards, Stephen Wilson Jr's (no relation) back story is remarkable. "Ten years ago I was a scientist in a lab coat and had never sung in front of anybody in my life," the singer-songwriter reflects. "So where I am now is all very surreal. In the weirdest way, it's an answer to a prayer that I wasn't capable of praying for."

Wilson is currently touring *Søn Of Dad*, his formidable 22-song debut that pays tribute to his late father while also mapping a unique journey from rural Indiana to Nashville. Along the way Wilson has been a Golden Gloves boxer, microbiologist, indie guitarist and Music City songwriter-for-hire. He had no intention of being a solo artist at all, but his father's death, in 2018, unlocked something new. "Right afterwards, for whatever reason, this voice just kind of showed up," he says. "And I ain't going to pretend to understand it."

Grunge, country and hardworn rock all feed into *Søn Of Dad*. Growing up, Wilson loved the music of Soundgarden and Nirvana every inch as much as that of Willie Nelson. Back then, raised in a deeply Pentecostal community in Seymour, it was the soundtrack to another pursuit. "My hillbilly father was a boxer, so my earliest memories are in a gym or watching his fights," he explains. "And my first stage was a boxing ring. I had my first fight aged seven. There's a lot of rhythm in boxing, and so many stories floating around in gyms everywhere. Fighters almost always have a story, and every songwriter is looking for one."

The knockdowns also prepared him for the setbacks of the music business. In 2016, when he quit his research science job, Wilson had already spent years playing guitar in dance-rock also-rans AutoVaughn. It only made him double down on his ambition to become a professional songwriter. "You have to be able to take a punch over and over again, literally and figuratively, and be like: 'Is that all you got?'"

He was taken on by BMG Nashville, where he wrote for the likes of Brothers Osborne, Tim McGraw and Sixpence None The Richer. However, his father had always encouraged him to sing.

"I started keeping a record of what I was going through after he died," Wilson recalls. "I think the songs on *Søn Of Dad* were gifts given to help me understand that experience. All I've really done is give them away, hoping they might help somebody else. My dad loved helping people so much, and this record is really his spirit."

The album ends, fittingly, with *The Beginning*, suggesting a rebirth of sorts. "That song is true in every sense of the word," Wilson affirms. "Not just in terms of a career, but literally a new life, because Stephen Wilson Jr. died with my dad, and this fellow is here now. This really *is* just the beginning." **RH**

Søn Of Dad is out now via Big Loud Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"Soundgarden weren't just a band," Wilson says. "They were innovators, and that's what I identified pretty quickly. *Superunknown* taught me how to play guitar in a lot of different ways. They were like scientists, tinkering, inventing, creating a new sound. I was really drawn into that. It checked a lot of boxes for me."

ACACIA EVANS/PRESS

Styx
Come Sail Away

A song about being picked up and taken away by aliens, it gave the band a career boost and eventually took on a life of its own.

Words: **Dave Everley**

MASHED SPUDS
Styx were riding high on the back of the success of *Come Sail Away* and parent album *The Grand Illusion* when they arrived in Britain in May 1978 for their first UK gigs, a three-date mini-tour ending at London's Hammersmith Odeon. The support on that tour was a rising band named Dire Straits.

"I like Mark Knopfler, I like some of the things Dire Straits did, but I'd read what people had to say, and it was: 'Dire Straits, great. Styx? Fuck off,'" says Dennis DeYoung. "So I went out and watched them, and it was as exciting as a row of potatoes."

Styx's timing was lousy. The British press was wrapped up in punk. "I wanted to be loved by the British, because British bands were the reason I did what I did. But they were calling us dinosaurs. Jesus Christ, we've only just had success, let us enjoy it a little bit."

Dennis DeYoung was watching the sun hit the waves in the sea off Hawaii when the angels appeared. It was April 1977, and his band, Styx, were on the island to play the Crater festival, aka Hawaii's Woodstock.

It was a welcome stop-off on a long and grinding journey. Styx were six albums deep into their career, but they'd managed just a single Top 10 hit a few years earlier, with DeYoung's proto-power ballad *Lady*. "We should have been ahead of a plethora of bands – Queen, Kansas, we came before them all," says the effervescent DeYoung, who was Styx's keyboard player and co-vocalist from their inception in 1972. "But we were always opening for people – Aerosmith, Kiss, ZZ Top. Always the bridesmaids."

Yet here they were in Hawaii, soaking up the sun. For a bunch of guys who had grown up on the south side of Chicago, this was a dream. Seeing boats bobbing on the glinting water, an idea began to form in DeYoung's mind.

"I started thinking about sailing vessels, something that can take you away to the place in which you ultimately want to be," he says. "Whether it's a boat on which you're the captain, or a gathering of angels appearing above your head, sweeping you into the heavens."

That moment of celestial inspiration would be the spark for the song that revived Styx's fortunes: *Come Sail Away*. Almost 50 years after it became a US hit, this grandstanding pomp-rock classic occupies a similar place in American culture to *Don't Stop Believin'*, a shot of pure, euphoric emotion that has appeared in shows ranging from *ER* to *South Park*. And it remains the greatest power ballad ever written about alien abduction.

DeYoung started working up the idea he'd had in Hawaii as soon as he got back to Chicago. "Everybody thinks songwriting is magic – you pluck it out of the air," he says. "No, it's: 'That's good, leave it in. That's bad, let's not put it there.'"

As the band worked on it in Chicago's SIR studio, the song evolved from DeYoung's original idea into something even grander and more dramatic. It begins with his delicate piano notes, before a storm of guitars and drums erupt. "That's Styx pretending to be The Who," says DeYoung. "I said to [drummer] John Panazzo: 'Play like Keith Moon.'" The finished track was a six-minute mini-epic that revelled in its own grandeur, from DeYoung's fantastically theatrical vocals (has any singer ever rolled their 'l's quite like that?) to its euphoric crescendo.

But what truly kicked it to another level was the lyrics. '*We lived happily for ever, so the story goes/But somehow we missed out on the pot of gold*,' DeYoung sings, capturing the yearning he'd felt in Hawaii. But it's his declaration that '*a gathering of angels appears above my head*' that gives *Come Sail Away* its golden glow – a line reportedly inspired by The Book Of Ezekiel in the Bible. DeYoung laughs out loud at the suggestion.

"I wouldn't know Ezekiel from the pizza delivery guy," he cackles. "I was raised a Catholic, but devout? No. '*A gathering of angels appears above my head*'? I'll tell you what that is. That's the idea of being taken away by a higher power. Anything to get me out of standing behind the stage watching Gene Simmons."

But there's one last twist – these angels aren't angels, but aliens, arriving on a UFO to pick up DeYoung and take him away with them. '*We climbed aboard their starship and headed for the skies*,' sings DeYoung, welcoming this extra-terrestrial arrival. In the year of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, it made perfect sense.

"The aliens were JY's [guitarist/co-vocalist James 'JY' Young] idea," says DeYoung. "He goes: 'What if they were aliens?' He liked all that stuff. Me, I don't, but I wanted to make JY happy. But they're not aliens. I said 'starship'. I was thinking Captain Kirk. To me that was what it was about: getting on a starship and going all the way to the top. I wanted to be a star on a ship."

Come Sail Away, the first single from Styx's seventh album *The Grand Illusion*, was released in August 1977. Audiences latched onto its grandeur immediately,

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

and, after some initial resistance, so did radio. *Come Sail Away* gave Styx their second US Top 10 hit, four years after the first. They'd reached the pot of gold. "We stopped being the bridesmaid and became the bride," says DeYoung. "We broke away and never looked back, until [guitarist] Tommy Shaw quit in 1984."

Shaw's departure on the back of the previous year's contentious *Kilroy Was Here* album marked the end of the band's initial run, but *Come Sail Away* was already a rock radio staple. Then in 1998 DeYoung got a request from the makers of *South Park* to use the song in the show.

"I said: 'If these guys are gonna do

Sailing to success in '77: (l-r) Tommy Shaw, John Panozzo, James Young, Dennis DeYoung, Chuck Panozzo.

a Barbra Streisand on Styx, it's a no,'" says DeYoung, referring to *South Park*'s notoriously cruel send-up of the musical diva. "But [co-creator Matt Stone] called me up and said: 'No, no, we're fans of Styx.' I said: 'Okay, do whatever you want, make 'em laugh.' Best decision I ever made."

Come Sail Away appeared in two *South Park* episodes – most famously 1998's Chef Aid, which featured an affectionately hilarious version of the song with Eric Cartman on vocals and a funky cameo from soul legend Isaac Hayes, who played Chef. Since then it has appeared in loads of TV shows and films, ranging from *Freaks And Geeks* and *ER* to *The Virgin Suicides* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.

"The aliens were JY's idea. He liked all that stuff. I don't, but I wanted to make him happy."

"I'm watching *Freaks And Geeks*, and this prom scene comes on and *Come Sail Away* is playing. I started to tear up," DeYoung says. Then after pausing a beat: "Yeah, I was thinking of the money I was gonna make."

DeYoung was squeezed out of Styx in 1999, when health issues prevented him from touring (the band continued with replacement singer Lawrence Cooke). But he remains proud of what he achieved with the band, and with *Come Sail Away* in particular.

"It's quintessential Styx," he says. "All we wanted was to stamp out Queen and Aerosmith, but we touched a generation of people in a way that I never truly understood until years later."

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
August 1977

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.8

PERSONNEL
Dennis DeYoung
Vocals, piano, synthesiser
Tommy Shaw
Guitar, backing vocals
James 'JY' Young
Guitar, synthesiser, backing vocals
Chuck Panozzo
Bass
John Panozzo
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Dennis DeYoung

PRODUCED BY
Styx

LABEL
A&M

Q&A

Joe Satriani

The virtuoso's virtuoso on G3 pranking, handling Yngwie Malmsteen, and the Halloween costume he'd rather forget.

Interview: **Henry Yates** Portrait: **Jen Rosenstein**

Arriving in a flurry of liquid legato, whammy bar squawks and woodpecker-fast tapping, the inaugural G3 tour of 1996 – featuring shred-guitar alphas Joe Satriani, Steve Vai and Eric Johnson on the same stage – was a reminder that grunge didn't have everything its own way. Last year, after three decades of changing line-ups, the original trio went on a sell-out tour and rolled tape at LA's Orpheum Theatre. "Those shows were a gift," Satriani remembers of the fireworks, captured and now released on the *G3 Live Reunion* album.

In the sleevenotes you say it was tough to get G3 off the ground. Why was that?
The vibe back then was to keep the gunslinger guitar players away from each other. The record companies, the management, everyone, was like: "Don't stand next to that guy, because he's your competitor." At the same time, the promoters would say: "Can't we just have you guys come a month apart?"

So we had nice little arguments with them, saying: "This is different." This was something I felt the audience really wanted to see, because *I* wanted to see it. When I was fourteen, if I had a chance to see Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck together on the same stage, I'd think that was the greatest thing ever. I wouldn't be thinking like a promoter, I'd be thinking like a fan.

It probably didn't help that by the 90s guitar solos were an endangered species.
I didn't pay any attention to that, I guess. *The Extremist* [1992] came out as my love letter to the classic rock era, so it was a throwback record anyway, but when I emerged from the studio I realised: "Oh, it's all Nirvana and Soundgarden."

Did you resent Kurt Cobain at all for what he did to the rock'n'roll landscape?
Oh no, I was very happy with those Nirvana records. He was a great guitar player. You go back and look at Nirvana clips, and you realise this guy is playing everything he's supposed to play. He's not looking at what he's playing, so obviously he really knows the instrument. And he's playing with one of the greatest drummers of all time [Dave Grohl], so that wouldn't have worked if he was not a good guitarist.

What's it like catering for all those different personalities on G3?
Some guys are really straight-ahead. Like Eric, Steve and myself, we're not demanding when it comes to what we need before we head out on stage. And then other performers need a little more stuff. You have two extremes. Like, Robert Fripp, who said: "No lights on me, I want to sit down and I want to be behind everybody." So it was sort of an 'un-demand', y'know? And of course Yngwie [Malmsteen]… I mean, if you invite him, you have to just say: "I know what I'm inviting." To Yngwie's credit, he always plays so great and always puts on the Yngwie Malmsteen show. The only problem that I would have is that sometimes he wouldn't pay attention to other things happening on stage when his bit was done. Because he's just not used to not being the focus of the show. So as showleader, I just take a deep breath and say: "I have to understand that Yngwie's not used to this kind of thing." So we'd be as gentle as possible. Like, I'd say: "When Steve's soloing, don't throw your guitar up in the air right next to him, because he's got his eyes closed. I don't want him to get hit in the head!"

We're talking today on Halloween. What's been your best Halloween costume over the years?
We've always had tons of wigs and masks around the house. One year, there were lots of kids in the neighbourhood and all the parents made an effort to embarrass themselves, so I went as Joey Ramone. Of course, the kids just thought: "Why is Mr Satriani wearing a big black wig?"

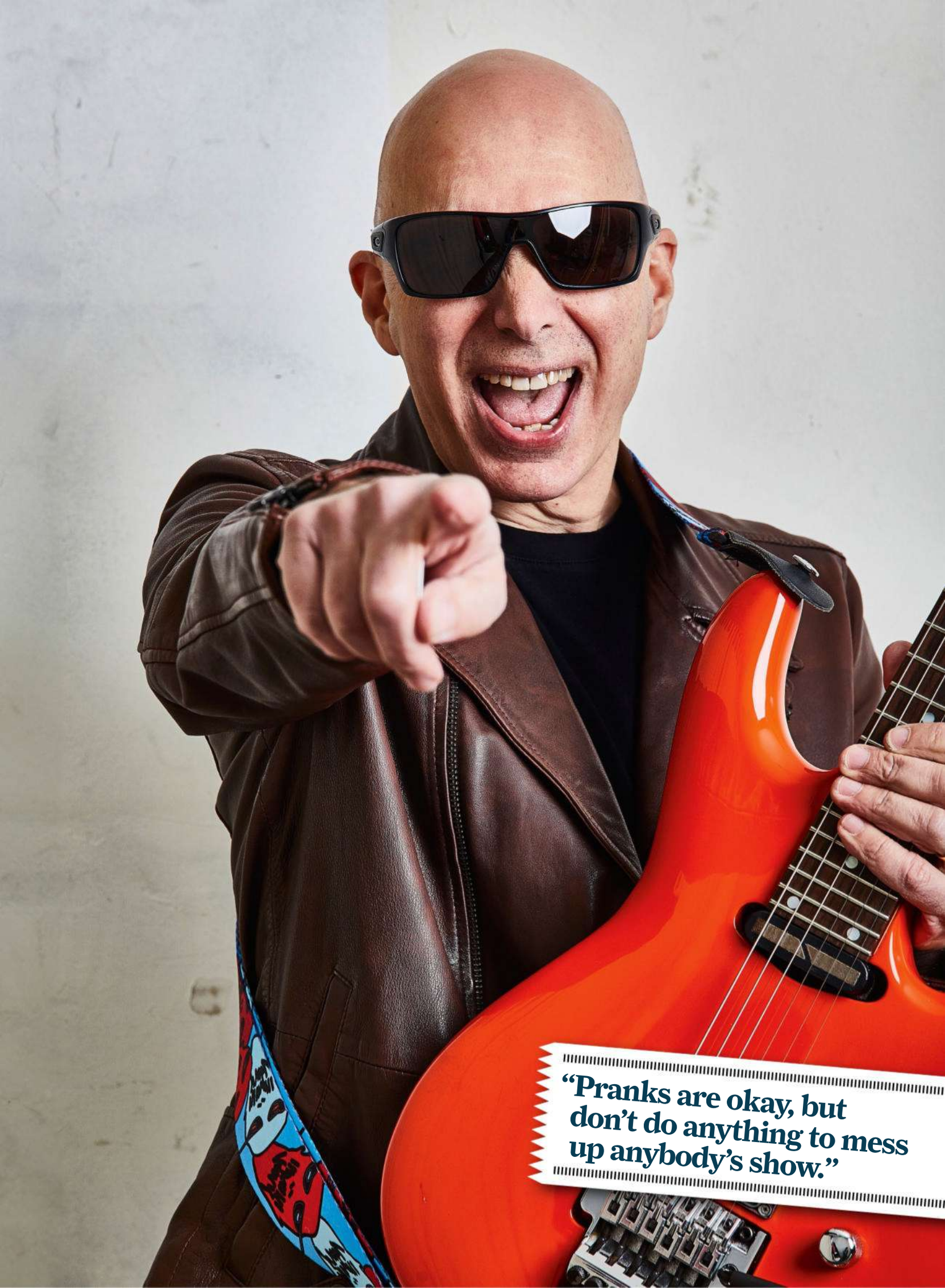
The funniest thing I ever did on Halloween, I was playing a gig and I had this alien mask. I thought: "I know, I'll come out and do *Surfing With The Alien* as the encore." After a minute, I realise I can't see the fretboard, I can't breathe and it's suddenly a hundred and twenty degrees in my head. The mask came off and I was drenched.

Is there any pranking on G3?
I remember I had a birthday in New York, and all of a sudden everybody had a can of silly string and I was just covered in this stuff. Another time, we were playing Mexico City and John Petrucci had a particularly ominous beginning to his show. So we all appeared on stage wearing robes and holding candles. And because John is unflappable, he played flawlessly and just laughed at us. What I've told our crews is: "Pranks are okay, but don't do anything to mess up anybody's show." You never know how important a given night is to a performer. It might be that they screwed up one note a week ago and it's still pissing them off.

Do you ever worry that a YouTube guitarist will come along who's technically better?
It's already happened! There's a couple of things to address here. Number one, if it *doesn't* happen, the world is in deep trouble. We need newer, smarter people to solve the human condition, in every field – scientists, doctors, writers. We need better, smarter, every single day. That's the whole point. We have children, and we raise better human beings to help us, so we don't become extinct. Also, if you're not excited about new players, then that's pretty sad. I'm excited about just about every player I see. I champion it, I always have. Because I started out teaching, and I got used to the idea that Steve Vai was gonna walk in my door and blow my mind.

What are your plans for 2025?
I have an album to finish writing and recording with Steve, then the Satch/Vai tour starts in Europe this summer. I guess I'll just keep playing until something breaks!

G3 Reunion Live featuring Joe Satriani, Eric Johnson and Steve Vai is out now via earMUSIC, and is available from g3tour.com



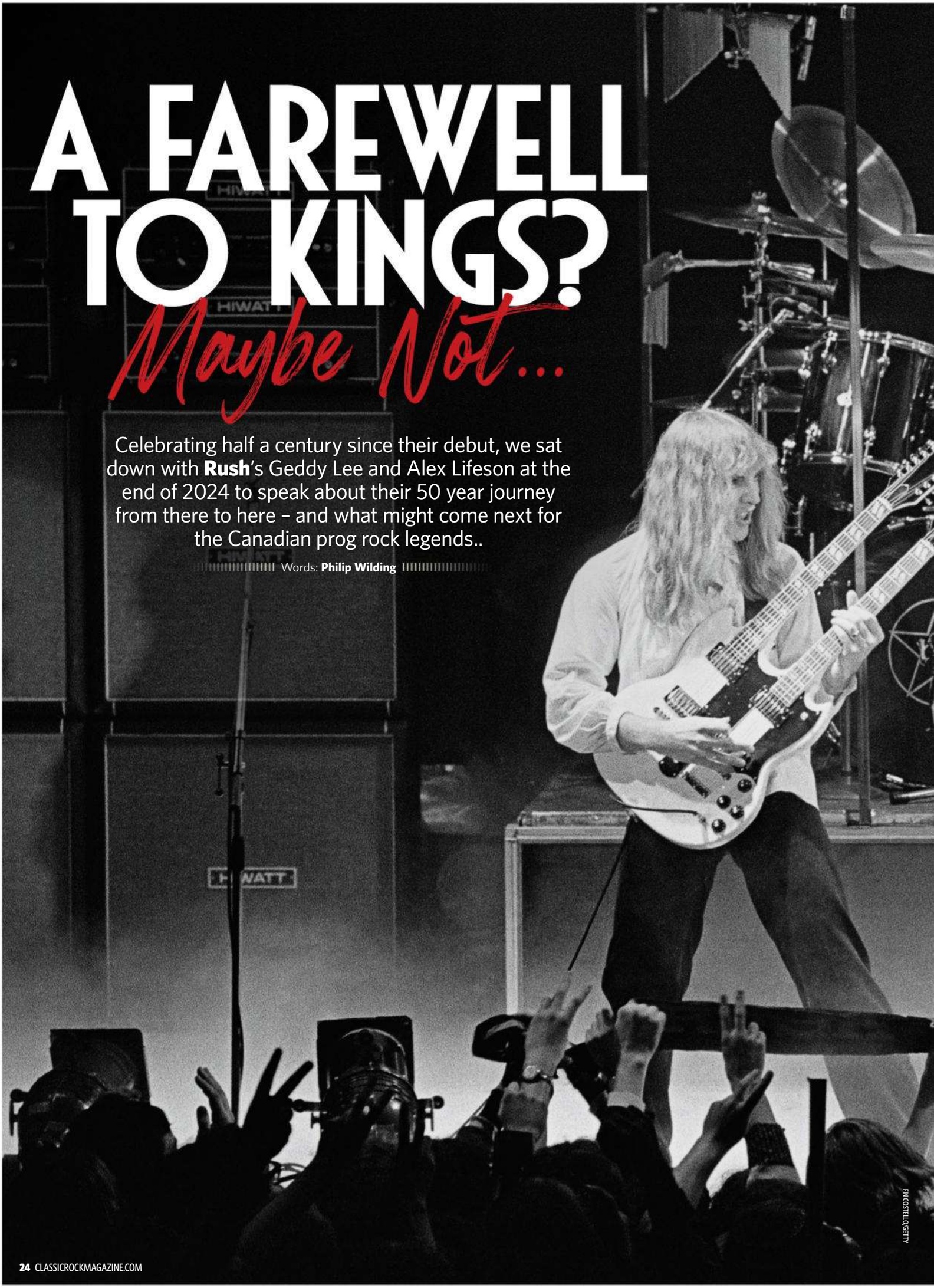
"Pranks are okay, but don't do anything to mess up anybody's show."

A FAREWELL TO KINGS?

Maybe Not...

Celebrating half a century since their debut, we sat down with **Rush**'s Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson at the end of 2024 to speak about their 50 year journey from there to here – and what might come next for the Canadian prog rock legends..

Words: **Philip Wilding**



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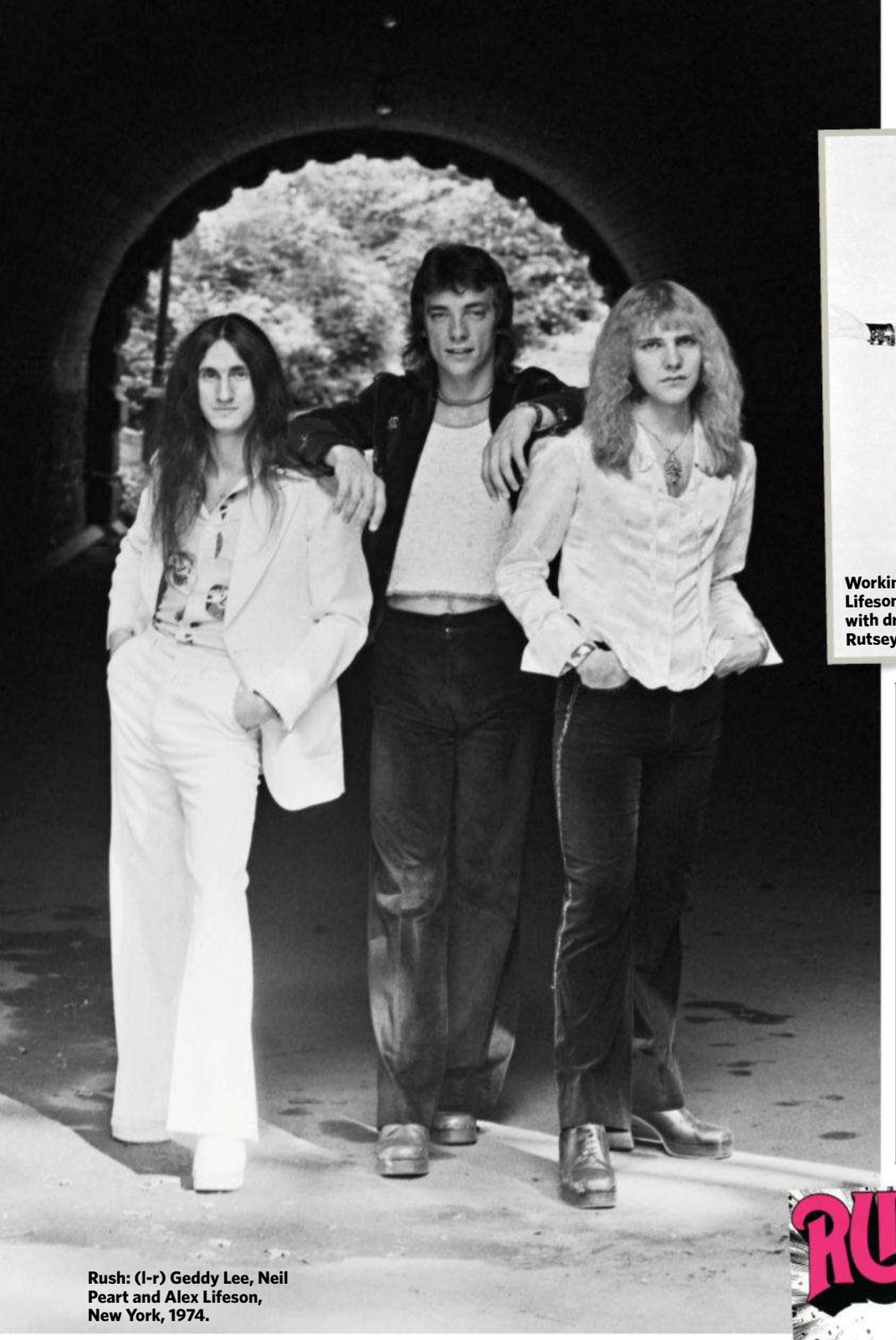


Rush: (l-r) Geddy Lee, Neil Peart and Alex Lifeson, New York, 1974.

Working men: Lifeson and Lee with drummer John Rutsey (centre) in 1974.

The future is unwritten (and questions to Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee about any plans for Rush are gently and politely batted back at me), although the past is littered with signposts, and unlikely trigger points, especially for two men who grew up playing and performing together for most of their adult lives. Thousands of miles – Lifeson at home in Toronto, Lee in London – and a few days apart, the bond between the two Rush members is as tangible as when they were two young men travelling in the back of a van, going from gig to gig across the Canadian wilds. They both look and sound great, vibrant and healthy, belying the fact they've both somehow reached 71. Which seems to come as something of a surprise to both of them, that they're now in what could be described as their third act.

We're here ostensibly to talk about Rush's forthcoming *R50* set, the latest collection of the band's live archive housed in a lavish box with new essays. (Full disclosure: I wrote about the band from *Vapor Trails* through to the final show in LA and everything in between for it.) *R50* also features some unreleased and hard-to-find audio from the band's very early club and high school days as well as the final song they played together as a band at the LA Forum show on the R40 tour. It's not only a thing of beauty, but also a bittersweet reminder of just how great Rush were as a live band, regardless of the decade they found themselves in. But, of course, that kind of live legacy only comes from the doing, and with Rush it was years and years of playing every unlit corner of Canada until the rest of the world began to take notice.

"We had trouble breaking out of Ontario," says Geddy. "But we played all the Toronto bars, Gasworks, Abbey Road Club, Piccadilly Tube. Are you seeing a theme here? And then Ray [Danniels], our manager at the time, would send us out to the boondocks to play bars way up north in places like Smith Falls or Thunder Bay. I have very, very vivid memories of those times. You'll notice I didn't use the word 'fond'."

Alex Lifeson: "My god, the club owner at the exotic Thunder Bay Motor Inn had us at one end of the motel, as far away as possible from the other five guests at his shitty inn."

Geddy Lee: "Boy, that was not a pleasant gig. And you're there for like, I think we were there at least a week, maybe more."

Lifeson: "Two weeks, there was virtually no heat in the two rooms the three of us were sharing."

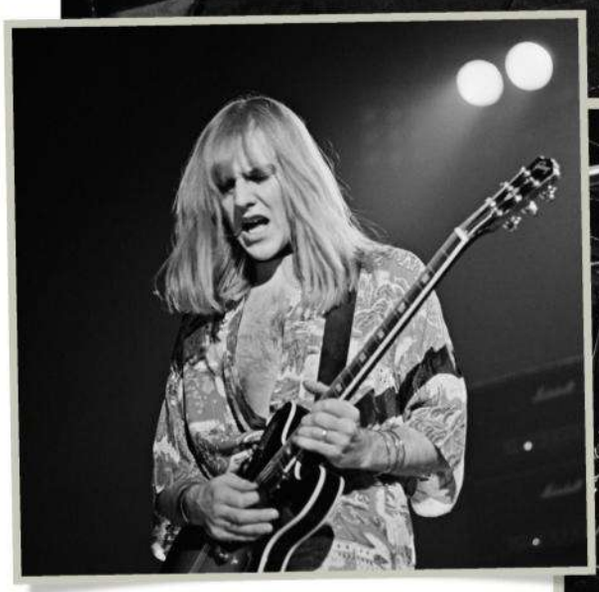
Lee: "And the entertainment didn't get the suite. No, no, no. We had a basic, large empty room full of cots. So, you had your cot, and you'd bundle up and sometimes it'd be so cold at night that you'd sleep with your hair dryer. And in the middle of the night, you wake up and you turn the hair dryer on under the covers to keep it warm. You'd get up in the morning and the first thing you do is take a shot of rye whiskey just to get your blood going again."

Lifeson: "I'll always remember the sound of those hairdryers under the sheets in the middle of the night. The crowds were dismal and disinterested. The guy in charge gave us some tequila before one show and so Ged and I switched instruments and played the set lying on our backs on the stage. I don't think anyone even blinked."

Lee: "And the whole time we were there, they didn't change the sign. They never announced

MAIN: DAVID GAHR/GETTY; INSET: MAMMEDIA/ICONICPIX

All The World's A Stage tour, 1976-77.



that it was Rush that was playing. They still had the sign from three weeks ago where a band called the Amazing Kabuki was playing. So, we'd go out on stage at this particular gig, ladies and gentlemen, the Amazing Kabuki! And so, there was the stage and there was a dance floor in front of the stage. Of course, not used for Rush songs, and then there was a mirror opposite the dance floor. So, you were playing and you're kind of looking at yourself. There were two bar rooms on either side where the people, or the lack of people sit, the few stragglers. You'd get guys that were already drunk and yelling things. 'Hey, play something by Neil Young!' We also used to have to do a Saturday matinee. You came in at 1pm and there were three people in the audience. And it almost didn't matter what you played, because the three people that were there, were there to drink."

Lifeson: "I remember that mirror across from the small dance floor and there was a support pole in the middle of the room. Just sort of staring at ourselves playing. I remember the seemingly generous owner offered drinks and food on the house on occasion, which we gratefully accepted as we had no money or any kind of advance. It was such a kind gesture until we realised he deducted every single thing from the menial performance fee that we were being paid. I think we were paid $700 per week before he deducted the 'free' club sandwiches and beers. We ended up going back home with hardly anything to show for it."

"Ged and I switched instruments and played the set lying on our backs on the stage. I don't think anyone even blinked." Alex Lifeson

Talking of paying your dues, a real highlight of the boxset are the tracks from the Agora Ballroom in Cleveland and the Laura Secord Secondary School, both from 1974.

Lee: "Real snapshots in time. The Agora Ballroom in Cleveland, that was a really important headline gig for us, that would have been our very first tour and on that tour, we were the opening act, so you put yourself back in that mindset where we're playing generally between 26 and 40 minutes max, usually closer to 30 minutes than 40. So, by the time we came to this club show it's our headline gig and we could play every song we ➢

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY x3

Backstage in Massachusetts, 1976.

"It'd be so cold at night that you'd sleep with your hair dryer. You turn the hair dryer on under the covers to keep it warm." Geddy Lee

knew, basically. And it was a ferocious crowd, it was a hot sweaty gig. I remember the gig really, really well. We weren't begging for time on someone else's show. That was our show. And one of the first headline shows with Neil, ever. I'm glad they found some songs from that night."

Lifeson: "Cleveland was a strong market for us from the beginning and playing at this venerated club introduced Rush to a wider audience and by that, I mean it felt like it was really our audience for the first time. I recall the stage was small and we were tightly packed in there, and by the end of the show, the room was hot and sweaty, and the audience was loud and so excited. I'm pretty sure I didn't wear a top for the encore, something I could get away with fifty years ago but wouldn't dare to do now. Come to think of it, I was pissed at myself for getting my guitar strap all sweaty!"

***Bad Boy* is one of the songs on the boxset from that night (the Larry Williams song that The Beatles covered). How come that was in your set?**

Lee: "I remember listening to the Beatles version when I was a kid and loving it. And when we were playing the bars, we needed some cover songs, or we wouldn't get hired. So, we would always pick songs by bands that had a big name, but we would pick songs that were obscure. But we could still say on our resume that we played a Beatles song. We used to do *Shotgun* by Jr. Walker & The All Stars too, but we would do a fifteen-minute version of it, which featured Alex Lifeson playing Echoplex and wah-wah pedals solo. *Working Man*, basically.

The Laura Secord Secondary School show was something we actually filmed for local television in Toronto. That was spring '74, John Rutsey's on the drums and we were already starting to be kind of a name on the Ontario circuit. The first album had just come out, but only in Canada at that point, on Moon Records. So, those kids would have heard us on the radio. One of the four times a week that we might have got some airplay. So, we were already building a kind of a fan base at that time. That was a great crowd. They were really into it."

Lifeson: "I was twenty at the time. I remember very little of the performance, I remember I was a little nervous before and how unusual it was to have a high school gig videotaped back then. I watched the clip again years ago and smiled at the image of these three young musicians I hardly recognised playing to a seated, self-conscious bunch of high schoolers. Thankfully, it provided the only video recorded performance of us with John Rutsey."

Lee: "It was that gig where we had this local, well known DJ who was the host and he introduced us and that became the impetus for what we did on R40 after the break in the set and we had Eugene Levy resurrect the character he played on *SCTV* [*Second City Television*], Rockin' Mel Slurp to bring us back out after the break, so we filmed him doing that, he was great, such a nice man."

The final song from the final show on the R40 tour – *Working Man* with nods to *What You're Doing* and *Garden Road* – is one other extra, which was at the point where the stage was stripped back and dressed like a high school gig. I know we've spoken before how R40 was never meant to be the final tour, but there must have been something in your collective subconscious that felt like it was saying goodbye?

Lifeson: "Not in my subconscious! It was a goodbye tour from the onset. Neil was very clear about that."

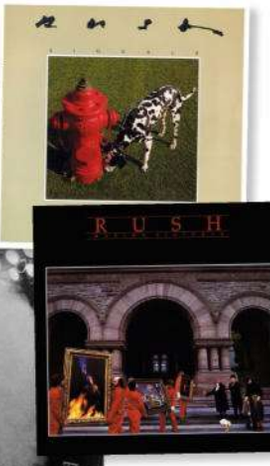
Lee: "The stage did look that way, the idea was appropriate enough for a retrospective. The fact that it was the last tour makes it more ➢

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY X 2

"I'm pretty sure I didn't wear a top for the encore, something I could get away with fifty years ago but wouldn't dare to do now."

Alex Lifeson

London's Hammersmith, May 1979.



"It [R40] was a goodbye tour from the onset. Neil was very clear about that."

Alex Lifeson

poignant, but that wasn't the purpose of it. I loved the idea of finishing the show in our earliest, most simple state. It wasn't my way of saying goodbye."

I was lucky enough to be out there for some of those final shows and you could feel Neil's mood lifting as Geddy's darkened. Where were you, Al – somewhere in between?

Lifeson: "Well, I was more in Ged's camp. We were playing well, the show was so much fun for us and our audience, and we had good energy despite playing three-hour shows in our sixties. Ged and I were disappointed that Neil demanded playing only a limited number of dates which precluded a UK and European run. I think a dozen or so more dates would have made us a bit more accepting. And there was a point where I think Neil was open to maybe extending the run and adding in a few more shows, but then he got this painful infection in one of his feet. I mean, he could barely walk to the stage at one point. They got him a golf cart to drive him to the stage. And he played a three-hour show, at the intensity he played every single show. That was amazing, but I think that was the point where he decided that the tour was only going to go on until that final show in LA."

It felt very final when Neil stepped off the drum riser and embraced you both at the end of the show. I remember people around me gasping, one woman was crying.

Lee: "The first time in forty years he'd done that, it was a beautiful moment."

Lifeson: "I remember being on stage and thinking how many times we'd played the Forum and wondering just how many times we'd done *Working Man* there because it's pretty much been in the set since day one. It was a weird feeling knowing that was likely the last time we'd play any of those songs together. I tried to soak in every moment and object at that last gig. I counted down the minutes on the giant clock they have there, you can see it from the stage. And I stared at all these faces, people that I didn't know personally, yet happily greeted when I saw them return to so many of our shows over so many years; I looked at my bandmates and missed them already and I felt sad to see such joy in Neil's face when we were down to the last few bars of our last song played together, as we finally finished our set."

Of course, you returned to the Forum and Wembley Stadium when you reunited for the Taylor Hawkins tribute shows in September 2022, and played Rush songs without Neil.

Lee: "Dave [Grohl] just called me out of the blue and said, look, we're going to put together a tribute, two shows and Taylor would have loved you and Alex to be part of it. I said, well, you had me at hello. But he's very wise and he's a very smart guy, Dave. He said, look, one thing we have to do is make sure it's not just one drummer, because you don't want people thinking this is Rush 2.0. And he brought Omar Hakim on board and they both flew up to Toronto to rehearse with me and Al. They made everything so easy for us. Al and I were pretty nervous about doing that show, about being Rush again, and he did everything he could to put us at ease.

"And, of course, Dave introduced us to Paul [McCartney]. We were at rehearsals at a recording studio here in London. Dave came up to me and goes, have you ever met Paul? And then he went outside, and Paul said to him, I've never met the boys in Rush before and he just brought him in. He was, of course, completely charming. Just talking about the forthcoming gig, just musician to musician. Every bit a gentleman."

Even he was trying to get the band back together after Wembley.

Leicester's De Montfort Hall in 1980.

Lee: "He was! He was so enthusiastic after our show. He was like our biggest promoter. He was trying to convince Al to go back on the road."

On that tip, after the soundcheck for the Wembley show you were both so buoyant, not to make this about 'will they or won't they reform', but that was the first time in a long time that I thought Rush, might actually go back out on tour.

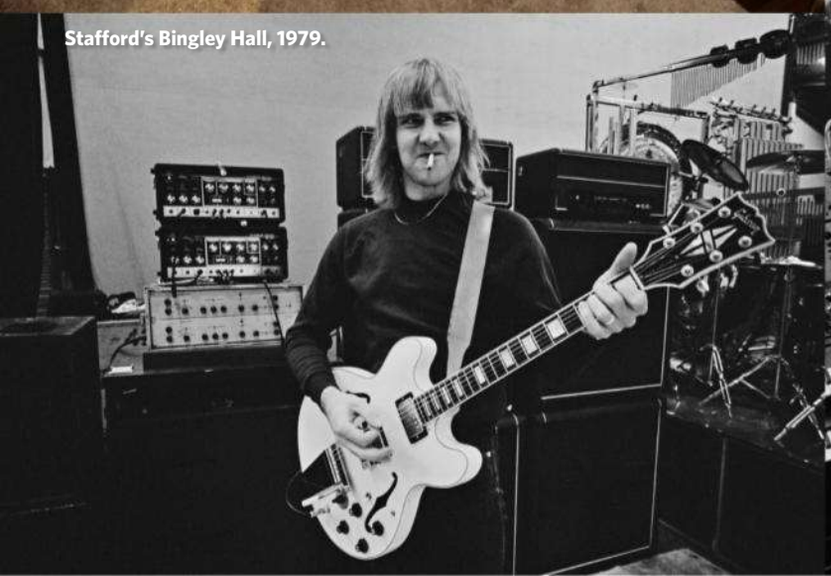
Lifeson: "The energy was fantastic around that show, I know, and some days I wake up wanting to go out ➢

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY

Port Huron, USA, 1977.

A Cleveland hello in 1977.

Recording *Permanent Waves* in Quebec, October 1979.



Stafford's Bingley Hall, 1979.

That 1985 style in full.

and tour again and some days I don't. For forty years Rush included Neil, and I don't think putting some new version together would have the same magic. It was an incredible experience working together and making so much music. It was beautiful how much we loved and respected each other, and how much we laughed but everything, amazing or not, dies eventually and we are left with the memories.

"After those two gigs and the months of prep Ged and I went through, I was excited by the response and to be in the dressing room again with so many fellow artists in Wembley and LA I respected and felt a kinship towards. But after a few weeks that wore off and it occurred to me that despite all the pain of loss, Rush went out on a high note playing as well as ever with one of our best stage shows on R40. I guess I'd rather be remembered for that legacy than returning as the top Rush tribute band."

Lee: "We were on high those few days, it felt good to be playing our material and interacting with different musicians. We were always a fairly insular band. There were very few bands whose albums we played on; we didn't really interact. Which I think now Alex is making up for lost time – you'll see him busking soon. But, more seriously, it was a real vote of confidence from all these other musicians. They wanted to play with us and some of the drummers we admired so much got to share the stage. Although we were all gathered there for a very sad purpose, it couldn't help but be also a tribute to our own lost partner and a reinforcing of community. I've never seen so many musicians from different walks of life all rooting for each other. The LA show was different for me, different vibe, not quite as magical."

Was part of that because it was returning to the Forum and playing Rush songs again?

Lee: "Partly that, partly that when we were all staying at the same hotel here in London, the bar was open every night for the bands only, it was like summer camp for musicians. So that sense of community was missing. But the performance was really interesting again. But you're right, I was not myself that day of the Forum show, it wasn't lost on me. I was returning to the scene of the crime, so to speak. I was lost in thought for a lot of the day. I had a hard time connecting with people as easily as I did when we were in London. And going back there represented a lot of things to me that I was still processing."

Returning to R40, when I helped with the Q&A section of your *My Effin' Life* book tour in the UK, the only thing you asked of me each night was to make sure I asked you about the band never making it here on that last tour. Why was that so important for you to get across?

Lee: "I'd pushed really hard to get more gigs so that we could do those extra shows and I was unsuccessful. I really felt like I let our British and European fans down. It felt to me incorrect that we didn't do it, but Neil was adamant that he would only do thirty shows and that was it. That to him was a huge compromise because he didn't want to do any shows. He didn't want to do one show. So, in his mind, he'd compromised already. He said, I'll do thirty gigs, don't ask me for any more. So that was that.

"I just kind of felt I owed an explanation to them, the audience. It's part of why I went into the detail I did about Neil's passing in the book, was to let fans in on what went down. That it wasn't a straight line. This is how complicated the whole world of Rush became since August 1 of 2015 until January 7th of 2020 when Neil passed. Those were very unusual, complicated, emotional times. Fans invested their whole being into our band and I thought they deserved a somewhat straight answer about what happened and how their favourite band came to end."

Was it odd on the book tour going back into venues like Massey Hall as a writer and not the bass player and singer for Rush?

Lee: "The first gig on the book tour in the US was at the Beacon Theatre in New York. And we'd played there as the second band on the bill about a hundred years ago, Rory Gallagher was the headliner, I think we got twenty minutes. So, I had really fond memories of that venue. There were a few of those older theatres that we played throughout the book tour that connected to me back to those early days of the band. But the book tour was so edifying, and I was shocked how comfortable I was in that situation. I didn't expect that from myself. Because there I was without a bass guitar in my hands, just walking out on stage and sort of bearing my soul to our fan base. It was an unmissable experience for me."

"I have the balls of President Kennedy, just for the record."

Geddy Lee

MAIN: ANDREW MACNAUGHTAN/PRESS; INSET: MMMEDIA / FOTOKEPX

Staying with the book tour, Al, you came out as the surprise host in Portsmouth – the roar when you appeared was deafening.

Lifeson: "It's a beautiful thing to be loved by strangers. And it was great to sit down with Geddy and do that, same thing with Massey Hall when we did the evening there. The reaction was so positive. And what a great book, I loved it. I laughed out loud, teared up and was engrossed throughout. I tell everyone who hasn't read it that they have to! I know most of his story and lived through much of it. Having a bond with another person to this degree is fortuitous and a blessing.

"Our friendship is so deep that it's difficult to describe. We try to spend time together weekly and keep in touch nearly daily. He just returned from a four week stay in London and I was so excited when he reached out to let me know he was back that I felt giddy. I get giddy for Geddy!"

Available lights: Rush on the Time Machine tour, 2010-2011.

"Once a week I go to Ged's, keep my fingers moving, play Rush stuff, new jams, and we do record it."

Alex Lifeson

Stepping away from Rush briefly, there's a second Envy Of None album due imminently. You mentioned how happy it makes you playing and creating music just for the sheer joy of it. What has that project brought you?

Lifeson: "I'm a golf slut and spent just a third of my usual time playing this year as I was in the studio working. The Envy of None project has been very important to me. Since the last Rush tour, it has provided me with purpose. I love writing and working with other very talented musicians. I love how it has forced me to think in different terms about the role guitar has in modern music. It has inspired me to play daily and investigate uncommon tones and colours. I love music and its power. Being that guy from Rush who plays like some guy not from Rush is liberating and allows me to share my love of the instrument that has been vital to my existence."

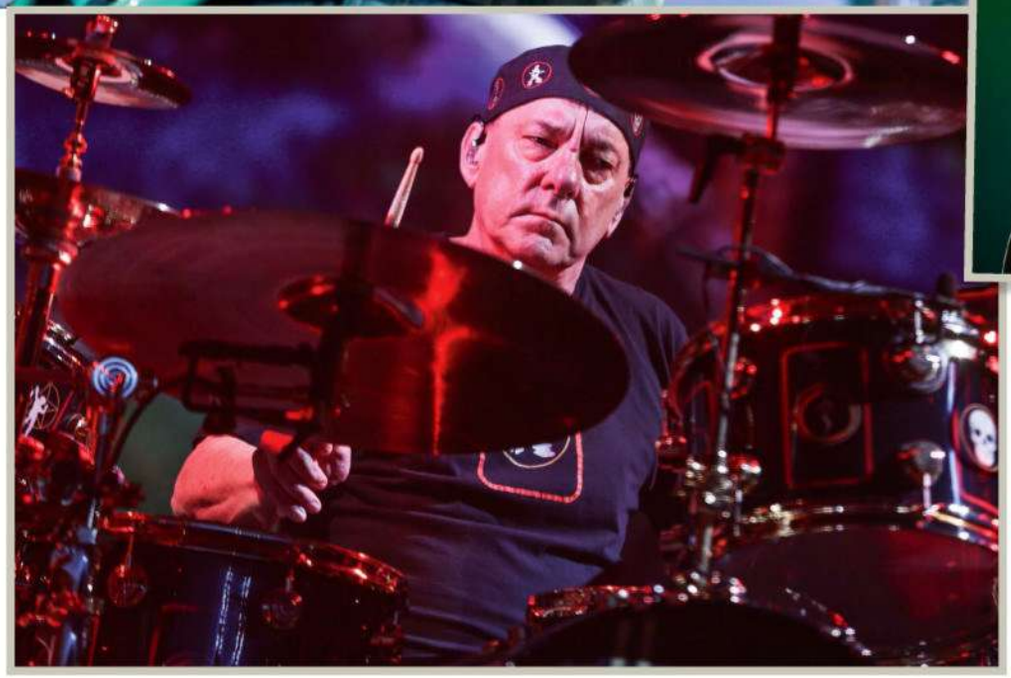
Talking of extra curricular activities, there's another book coming out, more akin to your *Big Book Of Bass* in tone and content: *72 Stories – From The Collection Of Geddy Lee*, combining your love of collecting and baseball.

Lee: "The reason I wrote it originally was to coincide with the sale of some of my baseball memorabilia. I basically chose seventy-two of the most interesting stories behind some of those items that were in my collection."

I recall you showing me your collection, with some baseballs signed by US Presidents. Was it hard letting those things go? Your love of baseball is well known.

HANS-MARTIN ISSLER / ICONICPIX X3

Rush at their final show of the R40 tour at LA's Forum – August 1, 2015.



"I felt sad to see such joy in Neil's face when we were down to the last few bars of our last song we played together." Geddy Lee

Lee: "I have the balls of President Kennedy, just for the record. I do love baseball. I love a lot of things though and I collect a lot of things. And I'm not getting younger, and I realised that I hadn't really added to my baseball collection in years. And I just felt that a collection is a living thing. Collections need feeding and watering. And I wasn't doing that anymore. I thought it's time to release some of my flock. I kept anything that had a personal resonance to me. Obviously, anything that was gifted to me from players. Anything that represented my love of the Blue Jays. I kept all that stuff, but I parted with some significant items and put them back out there in the world for other collectors to be the next custodian of.

"I have a house full of bass guitars and photos and first edition books and all the crazy shit that I collect. It's just too much. One day I'll be gone, and I don't want to leave this burden behind to my children to spend the rest of their life sorting out the crap that I collect. So, it was time to move some pieces on. Before I did, I wanted to write something about them so that I'd had a record of my favourite pieces or my favourite stories."

Can you imagine there'll ever come a day when some of the basses go too?

Lee: "I don't know yet. There's still a lot of those basses that I want to try to use for some practical purpose. But yeah, some of it, obviously. I'll probably start to move along to other collectors and things like that."

Do you still collect basses?

Lee: "I'm very particular now. You know, there was about an eight-year period where I was really passionate about it. And with collectors, you never really know if it's the item itself or if it's the search for the item; the chase is better than the catch. And I found really rare things, beautiful things. I learned so much about my instrument and it kind of felt in a way I was paying something back to the instrument that gave me everything I have. But as I get older, I just don't know where those things will fit in the future."

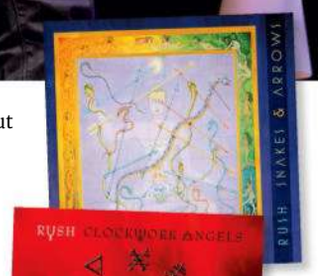
Going back to the R40 tour, one of the highlights of those shows was you playing a huge selection of your bass collection throughout the set as the evening wore on.

Lee: "We used twenty-seven basses each night, all vintage basses, with the exception of a couple of my standbys. My poor bass tech, he was lean and fit by the end of that tour just from going back and forth at the side of the stage. Again, we know

RICH FURIAY/ARMY OF ME

Alex was the surprise host in Portsmouth on Geddy's UK book tour in 2023.

it was not meant to be the farewell, but it was a nice way of working that dynamic in and I love those details."



R40 signalled the end of the band. But *Vapor Trails*, after Neil's tragedies, felt like a new beginning. Geddy once said it was his favourite period in the band – no petty arguments, just embracing the moment.

Lifeson: "Agreed. Rebirth can be like that. Filtering out all the trivial and focusing on what counts. It changed how we worked as songwriters too, how we interacted. That album was a turning point. We are two very different songwriters and arrangers. I'm somewhat more immediate and instinctive whereas he is more focused and methodical. These are primary personality traits that contributed to our partnership and the synergy of our efforts. I remember, the first few weeks in the studio for that record, we didn't play a single note, we talked, really.

"Then we started writing, it took a couple of months just to clear the cobwebs. Most of the stuff we originally wrote was us just going through the motions; I think, a lot of it sounded dated. And then we took a break and when we came back the machine started rolling and the record took on a life of its own."

What do you remember about that live return in 2002? Neil once said, "In that moment, we just looked at each other and it was just so very powerful and emotional, so right."

"I loved the idea of finishing the show in our earliest, most simple state. It wasn't my way of saying goodbye." Geddy Lee

Lifeson: "That was how it felt, I remember that; Ged and I turning to the drum riser, jamming it up, doing that rock'n'roll thing, and I had to fight to contain my emotions, I almost lost control a few times that night, it was a very emotional concert. Tears were flowing within the entire arena, including on the stage."

You're still best friends, you two still meet up and hang out and jam once a week.

Lifeson: "It's good to jam with friends as you get older. I need to play. Once a week I go to Ged's – it's in the calendar – keep my fingers moving, play Rush stuff, new jams. We do record it, but I couldn't even begin to tell you where it'll go."

With Dave Grohl at Wembley's Taylor Hawkins tribute in 2022.

Lee: "Al and I are lifelong friends. We jam together once in a while, it's true. That's all I want to say about that right now."

Though the pull of music's still strong? We heard some unreleased tracks from your 2000 solo album *My Favorite Headache* on the book tour.

Lee: "I've been spending the summer getting my fingers in shape because all these other day jobs I've taken – TV, writing and all that – have taken me away from my playing. And so, this was a summer that I dedicated to being at home for my family and also to be able to get my fingers back in shape and to get my head around writing different things, writing poetry and prose. And I don't know if that will end in those things becoming songs, if they'll surface in music or be left as prose. I don't know.

"But I needed this time to touch base with all those things that made me a musician and all those things that I had been ignoring to do these other projects. And that's where I am. I'm sort of at a crossroads where I don't know which way that will go. But I feel better prepared if I do decide to step into the breach and make music again."

Bespoke R50 merch is available now from rushbackstage.com. The R50 boxset will follow later in 2025. For the latest details, stay tuned to rush.com.

TOP: RICHARD SIBBALD/GEDDY LEE ARCHIVES; BOTTOM: KEVIN MAZUR/PRESS

WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER

The death of talismanic frontman Jim Morrison in 1971 looked like it marked the end of the road for **The Doors**. But his bandmates had other ideas. This is the story of the band's strange afterlife.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

The lizard king is dead, long live The Doors.

It's August 1971, barely a month after Jim Morrison was found dead in a bathtub in Paris, and his surviving bandmates in The Doors are putting the finishing touches to their first album without him. You might politely call this an act of professionalism. In less charitable terms it could easily appear plain cold.

Incredible as it might seem, at that time there hadn't been a whole lot of debate about whether or not to carry on. "Of all the mysteries surrounding The Doors, the one that maybe confounds people the most is why we thought we could still be a band after Jim died," guitarist Robby Krieger wrote in his 2021 memoir *Set The Night On Fire*. "It seems so ridiculous now, but there was some logic to it."

To be fair, there was more than a little logic to it. Krieger, keyboard player Ray Manzarek and dummer John Densmore had been writing and preparing songs for the next Doors album, while Morrison vacationed in Paris. According to Manzarek, Morrison had even rehearsed a number of new Doors songs prior to leaving for France. His non-return wasn't viewed as quite the artistic crisis it seemed. "At the time it made sense to write songs," Krieger reasoned. "It made sense to record. Our label was behind us all the way…Why not keep it going?"

In retrospect, the trio conceded that they should've allowed a period of mourning. But, as Densmore rationalised in his own biography *Riders On The Storm*: "We were so fired up to go on before Jim checked out that we didn't really acknowledge his death and grieve." ≫

TPI/PJ/GETTY IMAGES

The Morrison-less Doors in the mid-70s: (l-r) Ray Manzarek, Robby Krieger, John Densmore.

Manzarek, Krieger and Densmore reunite at the release party for *No One Here Gets Out Alive* at the Whisky A Go Go in 1980. Inset: Morrison's grave in Paris.

The immediate fruit of their labour was the album *Other Voices*. None of the band seriously entertained the idea of finding a replacement for Morrison, so they decided among themselves that Manzarek and Krieger would share lead vocals. Manzarek at least had form in this department, having sung in pre-Doors outfit Rick & The Ravens. The rest of the set-up was pretty much business as usual. Regular producer Bruce Botnick was at the controls, and recording took place in the familiar surrounds of The Doors Workshop, site of the *L.A. Woman* sessions, in Hollywood.

Notwithstanding the enormous Morrison-sized hole, *Other Voices*' other major difference was its team of bassists. Jerry Scheff returned from *L.A. Woman*, but shared the bass playing with Jack Conrad, Wolfgang Melz and Ray Neapolitan. The songs, at best, were serviceable. At worst, The Doors sounded like a workaday bar band.

Krieger's *Variety Is The Spice Of Life*, for example, quickly lapses into deadweight boogie, hardly enlivened by trite lyrics: *'All these pretty women with nothing to do/C'mon and help me try to find something new.' I'm Horny, I'm Stoned* sounds just as bad as its title suggests; *Down On The* Farm – supposedly rejected by Morrison during the *L.A. Woman* sessions – can't seem to decide whether it wants to be Canned Heat or a country pastiche.

There are some worthy moments, however. *Tightrope Ride* rattles along like prime Stones. Lyrically it feels aimed directly at the band's departed frontman, acting as both tribute and cautionary tale. There are allusions to isolation, madness and courting danger, while the final verse draws comparison to another doomed young soul: *'We're by your side, but you're all alone/ Like a Rolling Stone, like Brian Jones.' Hang On To Your Life* finds The Doors locating their classic groove, underpinned by Melz's sprightly funk bass line. The track accelerates, ultimately racing headlong into a manic jam. The epic *Ships With Sails* is similarly striking, not least for an extended instrumental passage that finds the trio truly inspired, negotiating folk-rock and jazz, and crowned by a great, open-ended Manzarek solo. It's telling that *Other Voices*' choice moments tend to be without vocals.

Released in late October '71, the album couldn't compete with its platinum-shifting predecessors, but peaked, fairly respectably, just outside the *Billboard* Top 30. Elektra Records boss Jac Holzman announced sales of 300,000, which, bolstered by a successful US tour that included sell-out dates at Carnegie Hall and Hollywood Palladium, was enough to warrant more studio time.

"[Jac] wasn't naïve enough to think a Morrison-less Doors album would break any sales records, but he stood by us like he always had," noted Krieger. "His undying support was, for better or worse, one of the big reasons we had to the guts to press forward."

"Our label was behind us all the way. Why not keep it going?"

Robby Krieger

For better or worse, indeed. The trio wasted no time in recording a follow-up. This time The Doors opted to produce the album without Botnick, and brought in the highly respected Henry Lewy – best known for his work with Joni Mitchell and Crosby, Stills & Nash – as engineer. In turn, Lewy enlisted a clutch of session players that included another round of guest bassists, percussionist Bobbye Hall, jazz sax supremo Charles Lloyd and backing singers Clydie King and Venetta Fields. The scenery changed too, albeit none too radically, The Doors switching base from the Workshop to A&M Studios a couple of miles away on N. LaBrea Avenue.

The resulting *Full Circle* didn't veer very far from its immediate predecessor. Again, Manzarek and Krieger split lead vocals. And while it's patently unfair to compare either to Morrison, both men's singing abilities are limited, however much spirit they try to inject. They're hardly saved by the music, either. *Get Up And Dance*, with The Flying Burrito Brothers' Chris Ethridge on bass, quickly descends into a generic chug. *'Golden days!'* goes the lyric, as if attempting to convince themselves that they're onto a good thing, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. *Hardwood Floor* doesn't help The Doors' rapidly sliding reputation either. Here, Manzarek riffs away on rinky-dink piano like he's playing for change in the saloon of some Western theme park. On *Good Rockin'*, a cover of Roy Brown's jump-blues standard made famous by Elvis as *Good Rockin' Tonight*, he goes all Jerry Lee Lewis on piano while Krieger sets about channelling Scotty Moore. The less said for *4 Billion Souls*' excruciating call for world peace, the better.

Yet *Full Circle* also deserves credit for daring to experiment a little. *The Mosquito*, the album's sole three-way co-write, offers a playful and unexpected burst of mariachi, complete with recurring hook, handclaps and party ambience. It

DONNA SANTISI/GETTY

UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES INSET: JOHN WOOLFORD

"The Doors without Morrison weren't The Doors, were they?"

Ray Manzarek

was inspired by a holiday that Krieger and his wife took to Baja in Mexico, where they were serenaded one evening by a bunch of local musicians.

"They had a song about a mosquito that I wanted to learn," the guitarist recalled later. "But when I got home I couldn't quite remember it, so I wrote my own mariachi-sounding tune with simple Spanish lyrics."

The Doors lean into it with such gusto – swirling organ runs, a Densmore drum break, jazzy outro – that you can almost forgive Krieger for rhyming *'mosquito'* with *'burrito'*.

Full Circle packs a couple more surprises in *Verdilac* and *The Piano Bird*. The former takes a detour into New Orleans jazz-funk, dominated by Manzarek's organ playing and Charles Lloyd's tenor sax. *The Piano Bird* follows in similar vein, led out by Krieger's light, rhythmic guitar figure. There's a loose, carefree air to it all, with Lloyd's jazz flute high in the mix, perhaps suggesting an unexpected way out of The Doors' post-Morrison malaise.

Released in August '72, *Full Circle* fared worse than *Other Voices*, peaking at No.68 in the States. Both albums hardly registered at all in other countries, despite the novelty success of *The Mosquito* in random parts of Europe, where it became a Top 20 single. It's instructive to note that Krieger dispenses with both albums within two pages of his memoir. Densmore is even more dismissive in *Riders On The Storm*, washing his hands of both in just a couple of paragraphs.

The Doors were still a decent live draw, through. So much so that, following their subsequent tour of Europe, they flew to London in early 1973, with the express purpose of finally bringing in a new frontman. They weren't after a Morrison copyist. Instead, as Krieger put ≫

it, they wanted "someone who could theoretically take us in a bold new direction".

Paul McCartney, Paul Rodgers and Joe Cocker were among the names brainstormed in The Doors' hotel room. Contrary to rumour, Morrison disciple Iggy Pop was never in contention. A front runner soon emerged in the shape of Howard Werth, who'd recently forsaken art-rockers Audience for a solo career.

"I came on the scene because Jac Holzman wanted to make Audience the new band on his Elektra label," Werth told *Classic Rock* in 2014. "But after we broke up he decided to try to put me and The Doors together."

Werth had already started work on his first solo record, *King Brilliant*, but agreed to take part in rehearsals with Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore in West London. "Those rehearsals were quite strong and powerful," he recalled. "We were just ploughing through. It wasn't a matter of them suddenly turning round and going: 'Oh, that's good' or 'You're the one'. We were just enjoying it and waiting for the situation to happen or not. And, as it turned out, it didn't."

Manzarek duly flew back home with his wife Dorothy, who was pregnant and miserable in England. But not before he had rowed with Krieger and Densmore over the musical direction of the band. In simple terms, Manzarek wanted more jazz, while the other two were intent on pursuing rock.

"It was just time to put The Doors to bed," Manzarek explained to *Melody Maker* later that year. "Some things can go on for a long time and others can't. And The Doors without Morrison weren't The Doors, were they?"

"We didn't really acknowledge Jim's death and grieve."

John Densmore

Krieger and Densmore stayed on in the UK and formed the Butts Band with singer Jess Roden and others. The group lasted through a major line-up change, relocation to Los Angeles and two so-so studio albums. It was, said Krieger, "our first lesson in trying to escape the shadow of the past".

Meanwhile, Manzarek released a couple of ill-judged solo albums, briefly rehearsed with Iggy Pop, and in 1977 started his own band, Nite City. Nobody bought those records either. The shadow of the past, it seemed, was longer than any of them imagined.

Sometime in 1977, Krieger was sorting through some old boxes when he happened upon a present that Morrison had given him prior to leaving for Paris. Morrison had self-published a book of poetry, bound in red leather and gold-stamped with the title *An American Prayer*. Leafing through the slim collection, the guitarist began thinking.

Morrison had gone into the studio to record some poetry in February 1969. The idea, hatched between him and Jac Holzman, was to release a spoken-word album for Elektra. The singer returned to Village Recorders in LA on December 8, 1970 – his 27th birthday. Producer John Haeny picked up Morrison on the way, stopping off at a liquor store to buy him a bottle of Old Bushmills Irish whiskey as a gift. There was methodology in

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Reunited in 1984 to mark the release of the *L.A. Woman* video. Left: Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore in the 70s.

ROBERT LANDAU/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

this tactic. As Haeny later explained: "[Ex-Doors producer] Paul Rothchild told me that Irish whiskey was the key that unlocked the door to the room where Jim kept the crazed Irish poet."

In the early summer of 1971, at Morrison's request Haeny had intended to travel to Paris to record the album in earnest. But it wasn't to be. The producer ended up sitting on the session tapes for the duration, until Krieger called several years later.

Haeny duly invited the three surviving Doors up to his house in Laurel Canyon to have a listen to the recordings.

"When Jim's voice came out of the speakers, I instantly heard lifts and falls," Krieger recalled in *Set The Night On Fire*. "Rhythms and hints of melodies. Jim had a naturally musical way of speaking, and it immediately sparked ideas in my head for guitar licks and chord structures."

With Haeny overseeing the project, Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore once again set about the task of putting Morrison's words to music.

Blues seemed the obvious starting point as a textural backdrop, perfectly illustrated on the sultry, bruised *Angels And Sailors*. But The Doors opted to mix it up, guided by the varying cadences and tones in Morrison's speech. *Curses, Invocations* pivots around a discreet jazz riff; *American Night* is all clangy dissonance; *Ghost Song* dives into fusionist funk, with Manzarek vamping away while guest Bob Glaub punctuates things with snapping bass.

Other elements are drawn from audio collage. There's dialogue from Morrison's experimental film *HWY: An American Pastoral*, bits of jam sessions, excerpts from *Riders On The Storm* and such. An unruly live version of *Roadhouse Blues* is spliced from two Doors gigs in New York and Detroit from 1970. *A Feast Of Friends* is set to a new arrangement of classical piece *Adagio In G Minor*, which the band initially recorded during sessions for *The Soft Parade*. "Jim had always loved the recording," justified Krieger, "so we thought it would be fitting to revive the song for him."

Thematically, *An American Prayer* was both self-glorifying and conceptual. The Doors split the poems into five loose sections, covering Morrison's formative childhood, high school years, poetic ambitions, Doors fame and, as Manzarek later put it, "a final summation, in a way, of the man's entire life and philosophy".

Released in November 1978, the album did much to massage the myth. *Dawn's Highway* featured the oft-repeated tale of how the Morrison family – with four-year-old Jim in the back – came across a truckload of Native Americans scattered on a desert highway, bleeding to death after an accident. Looking back, he believes that *'the souls of the ghosts of those dead Indians, maybe one or two of 'em, were just running around freaking out/And just leaped into my soul.'* Here was Morrison portrayed as rebel poet and shaman, rock's broody leather Dionysus, mojo risin' from the grave. Never mind the mixed reviews, *An American Prayer* went platinum, becoming the biggest-selling spoken-word album in history at the time.

Its success set into motion a Morrison revival that quickly morphed into cultural fixation. Within six months, Francis Ford Coppola was using The Doors' *The End* to presage the dread and horror of *Apocalypse Now*, Morrison's soul-purging nightmare writ large over American involvement in Vietnam. In 1980, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, by Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, became the first Morrison biography. Criticised for Sugerman's implication that the singer may have faked his own death, its sensationalism fed directly into the growing legend.

Elektra sensed an opportunity too. A reissue of The Doors' debut album was a hit all over again. A hurriedly assembled 'greatest hits' collection went multi-platinum. By September 1981, *Rolling Stone* had Morrison splashed on its cover, 10 years after his death, under the editorial: "He's hot, he's sexy and he's dead!" It turned out that Morrison had already called it in the words of *An American Prayer*: "We live, we die and death not ends it."

ON HALLOWED GROUND

What links the Queen Of Soul, the birth of the Allman Brothers Band, and the new album from retro-rock flag bearers **DeWolff**? The answer lies in two legendary recording studios down south in the Alabama swamp.

Words: **David West**

"I don't know when this started," says Pablo van de Poel, "but a couple of years ago we started seeing every album as an adventure."

Beneath their veneer as retro-rockers par excellence, DeWolff – Pablo, his drumming brother Luka and their organ-playing best pal Robin Piso – have made a virtue of fearlessly experimenting with how they make, and release, music. *Tascam Tapes* (2019) was recorded on tour with a vintage four-track recorder. Last year's *Love, Death & In Between* tapped into gospel music, with its backing singers and horn players. *Nonagon Marathon*, an epic nine-concert live video, was released on – would you believe – a USB memory stick.

Continuing that horizon-expanding tradition, DeWolff's latest musical leap took the band (and touring bassist Levi Vis) from Maastricht in the Netherlands to Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Named after that fabled city, *Muscle Shoals* is their grooviest work to date, by turns soulful, bluesy, fuzzy and gritty, but always rooted in their signature vintage rock sound.

Sitting on the swampy banks of the Tennessee River, Muscle Shoals holds a unique place in American musical history as home to two legendary recording studios. Founded in 1959, FAME created the definitive sound of soul and R&B, where Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett cut one hit after another. In 1969, four members of FAME's in-house band, nicknamed The Swampers, split off and opened Muscle Shoals Sound Studio across town, attracting the likes of the Rolling Stones, Bob Seger and Lynyrd Skynyrd, all seeking that indefinable Muscle Shoals magic.

Then, in 2024, DeWolff became the first Dutch band to record there.

> **"It wasn't the plan to make a soul record, and I'm very glad that we didn't pursue that idea."**
>
> **Pablo van de Poel**

The way *Muscle Shoals* happened, Pablo says, was "kind of weird". They had planned to record album number 10 with Black Crowes guitarist Chris Robinson as producer, but their respective schedules couldn't be aligned. Pablo had visited Muscle Shoals while on holiday in 2019 and toured both recording studios. The experience planted the seed of one day bringing DeWolff to Muscle Shoals Sound, where Boz Scaggs recorded his self-titled 1969 album – something of a lodestar for the sound the band wanted to capture.

Then in November 2023, Pablo saw country artist Dylan LeBlanc in concert. Chatting with the singer after the show, Poel mentioned his nascent notion of recording at Muscle Shoals Sound. "He was like: 'Yeah for sure!'" Pablo says. "But you also have to record at FAME, because FAME has ≫

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SHOES
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
MARY POPPINS
MAY3 7PM MAY4 2PM & 7P
DIR. BY JANA WILL

Standing, and recording, in the footsteps of giants. DeWolff during the making of new album *Muscle Shoals*.

been an operational studio for the past sixty years and it's a really good vibe, and you should do it with Ben Tanner.'"

But Poel wasn't completely sold on the idea of FAME. "I wasn't super-impressed when I did the tour," he recalls. That's where Tanner proved vital to the album's genesis. Born and raised in Muscle Shoals itself, Tanner began his music career as FAME's chief engineer and studio manager. While his production discography leans towards Americana and country artists such as Jason Isbell, he jumped at the chance to work with the Dutch rockers. And he wanted to take them to his old workplace.

"Ben said: 'We should record the biggest part of the album at FAME, because anything you want to do at a recording studio, you can do there.' And [at] Muscle Shoals Sound the options are way more limited," says Poel. "Also, the sound is weird. The first time we heard our music being played back through the speakers at Muscle Shoals Sound we were like: 'What is this? What are we listening to?' It sounded all weird and small and boxy. FAME doesn't have that. FAME really wants to provide you with the best possible recording experience."

Although FAME has a long and deep association with soul music, that wasn't the vibe that DeWolff were looking for – although the influence of their surroundings undeniably seeps into the seductive soul of *Winner (When It Comes To Losing)* or the deep bluesy feel of *Snowbird*. "It wasn't the plan to make a soul record, and I'm very glad that we didn't pursue that idea," says van de Poel. "This is what DeWolff sounds like when they record at FAME and Muscle Shoals."

Indeed, the history of the city is equally rich in rock: "I think FAME is more the soul place," he continues, "and Muscle Shoals Sound is more the rock'n'roll place where the Stones recorded, Willie Nelson, Leon Russell. The grand piano that Leon Russell recorded *Leon Russell And The Shelter People* on was still there. Man, every time he'd walk past the piano, Robin would play the intro to [Russell's] *Of Thee I Sing*, and I'd laugh. This is the instrument and the room where it was recorded."

"I started crying. I was completely overwhelmed by how special it was that we were there [Muscle Shoals]."

Pablo van de Poel

Despite those early misgivings about using two famous (but very different) facilities, Tanner's intuition proved right.

"I'm very glad we did both studios, because I wouldn't have wanted to miss that experience, but for me personally FAME was the best recording experience I have ever had," says Pablo. "I think it is something in the air. It has such a classic vibe. You hear all these stories, and you're confronted with the history constantly, but you really feel there is some magical vibe in that room."

While warming up at FAME, the band started playing the songs for their album, before they segued into jamming on tunes that they knew were recorded right where they stood.

"I get goosebumps talking about it now," says Poel. "We looked at each other: 'Oh my god, we're here and it sounds like those recordings!' Little Richard was there, Wilson Pickett was there. We walked through Studio B and there's a picture of Duane Allman, Berry Oakley and Jaimoe having the first ever Allman Brothers rehearsal there in that little room. It's something else."

In Muscle Shoals you can literally hold history in your hands, as Poel learned during a break from recording, when DeWolff took a tour through the rest of the building. "There were all these original Duane Allman tapes from 1968/69. We went through [studio owner/producer] Rick Hall's office upstairs, and I played this acoustic guitar," says Poel. "Then Spencer, the assistant engineer and tour guide, showed me a picture with that same guitar in the hands of Otis Redding."

"It's totally crazy," he continues, recalling that powerful moment in their Alabama adventure – that sense of themselves, the studio's first Dutch recording artists, making their own piece of history. "Spencer, he's been working there for many years, and at one point he said: 'You guys being here, recording this music in this room, *that's* the idea, *that's* what it's supposed to be like.' I started crying. I was completely overwhelmed by how special it was that we were there. It's one of the highlights of my life, really."

Muscle Shoals is out now via Mascot Records.

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SWEET TALKIN'

One of the best-loved bands of the glam era, **Sweet**, more than most, splashed colour and fun over the 70s pop world. Guitarist Andy Scott, keeper of the flame, looks back at good times and bad, and hints that it's not over for the *Ballroom Blitz*ers yet.

Words: **Dave Ling** Portraits: **Kevin Nixon**

Heads turn as Andy Scott pushes through the saloon doors of The Barley Mow, a mane of long white hair trailing behind him. To commemorate the final album by Scott's band Sweet, *Classic Rock* has brought the guitarist back to the pub in London's Paddington frequented by the original group throughout the 70s. This is the watering hole in which Sweet came to relax over a pint or three following the recording of their biggest hits, including *Hellraiser*, *Blockbuster!* and *The Ballroom Blitz*. According to Sweet folklore, a section of *Fox On The Run* may even have been written within these walls.

Scott isn't entirely sure whether he visited The Barley Mow since those heady days. "I may have done," he says, grinning, "but that would be when I lived in London", and the inference is clear. These days the Welsh guitarist – who in June 2024 celebrated his 75th birthday with an event in Portmeirion surrounded by fans who have adored him for decades – resides more peacefully in the West Country, with wife Jane and their dog Ted.

Strictly speaking, Scott isn't a Sweet original (the hitmakers were called The Sweet until '74), having become their third lead guitarist in 1970. More than half a century on, following the deaths of blond bombshell frontman Brian Connolly in 1997, drummer Mick Tucker in 2002 and bassist Steve Priest four years ago, Scott became the last man standing from the group that found superstardom during the era of glam rock. That fact weighs heavy on his mind, and although relations between band members were tempestuous at times – Sweet reluctantly sacked Connolly in 1979, when he was gripped by the alcoholism that eventually claimed his life, then continued as a three-piece – absent friends are never too far from Scott's thoughts or words.

"The ones that stood out from the pack were Bolan, Bowie, Slade and us."

Having fought testicular cancer for 15 years, Scott is very much in touch with his own mortality, and is determined to enjoy the years he has left as both a musician and a human being. For now, with a half-pint of bitter in hand, a nostalgic Scott is enjoying being back at The Barley Mow, close to where back in the day, Sweet became fixtures at Audio International Studios in Rodmarten Street.

"With the singles, we'd get everything done in one day, including B-sides, before heading over here," he remembers. "The first was probably *Poppa Joe* [a UK No.11 in 1972], though we didn't play on that one."

At the beginning, with external songwriters Mike Chapman and Nicky Chinn (aka ≫

Hell raising and blockbusting, Sweet circa 1973: (l-r) Mick Tucker, Steve Priest, Andy Scott, Brian Connolly.

Chinnichap, whose roster also included Suzi Quatro and Mud) and producer Phil Wainman insisting that the early Sweet records were done by session players, only Connolly's voice was on them. "Our first session [as players] was *Little Willy*," he continues, referring to a No.4 from that same year.

Transporting Scott back in time to the 70s, which Sweet member would have been the first to the bar?

"Steve would *not* have been buying a round, I can tell you that now," he says, smiling. "Mick or myself would have been in the chair. If our tour manager was around, drinks would have been on the band."

Who would have been chatting up the barmaid?

"Take a guess," he demands, grinning. "It wasn't me."

Then as the lead singer it had to be Brian.

"No. It was Mick. On the *Sweet Fanny Adams* album Mick wanted a dedication to 'the barmaid at the Barley Mow'. Check it, it's there." (He isn't lying).

Amazingly, Sweet sometimes tumbled out of Audio International and into the boozer wearing outlandish clobber similar to what they wore on *Top Of The Pops*.

"The ridiculous thing is that we used to show up at recording sessions dressed up to the nines – well, Mick and I did," Scott recalls with a twinge of embarrassment. "Steve tended to dress down, and Brian often wore a jacket with matching trousers, but Mick and I would be there in our long leather coats, or in the winter it would be fur coats."

With millions watching *Top Of The Pops* every Thursday evening, the usual suspects – Sweet, Slade, Bolan, Bowie – seemed to take turns to elevate things to the next extreme. Few will forget that on the *TOTP* Christmas special in 1973, Priest astonished viewers when they borrowed a Nazi uniform, complete with Hitler 'tache and Swastika armband, from the Beeb's props department.

"I knew that if I left Sweet the band would disintegrate, and we still had unfinished business."

Asked how it felt to have the most popular single in the country, even for just a week (*Blockbuster* was Sweet's sole UK chart topper, holding off their RCA labelmate Bowie's similar-sounding *The Jean Genie* at No.2), Scott momentarily turns misty-eyed.

"It's fantastic, the absolute zenith of all you've worked for," he says proudly. "Nowadays it's difficult to find out who is number one in the chart, and if you do, chances are you won't know who they are anyway."

It was Marc Bolan who fuelled Sweet's glam bug, advising them where they could source the most outlandish costumes. The band members endured cramped feet until Scott found a cobbler willing to make women's boots in men's sizes. "I had a pair of blue metallic leather ones with silver bits that I wore for years," he reminisces, before relating how Mick Tucker visited the now legendary Kensington Market stall run by Queen's Freddie Mercury and Roger Taylor: "After buying a pair of boots similar to mine, Mick being Mick told Freddie who he was. As Mick walked away, Freddie shouted: 'We'll be bigger than you one day.'"

Queen had the last laugh, of course, and Sweet never forgave their rivals for what they saw as appropriating and popularising their own super-harmonised, multi-layered sound. The sleeve of Sweet's 1976 album *Give Us A Wink* was covered in faux graffiti, including the declaration: "Queen are a bunch of winkers" that had the first word almost but not quite erased.

Following their final Chinnichap hit, *The Six Teens*, in the summer of '74, the band toned down the glam glitter and platform boots and adopted a look more befitting a rock group. Sweet were young, talented, famous and rich, and they wanted the world to know it.

"I once told my now-wife Jane that had she met me back then she wouldn't have liked us," Scott admits. "We had a lot of self-confidence. We didn't suffer fools gladly. Even checking into hotels was too much effort – we made our tour manager do that for us. Some hotels would allow

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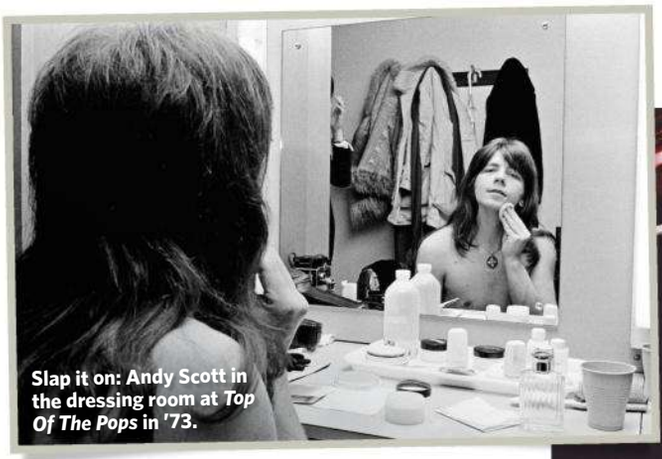

Slap it on: Andy Scott in the dressing room at *Top Of The Pops* in '73.

Christmas cracker: Sweet performing *Blockbuster* on *Top Of The Pops* on December 25, 1973.

"So it's leather tonight rather than satin and silk?" Andy Scott, Mick Tucker and Brian Connolly, Copenhagen, 1975.

Sweet get heavy metal: receiving gold discs in Sweden, October 1974.

it, which caused a lot of chaos. But in that glam era of '72 to '74, that's how you had to be," he adds in self-defence. "The ones that stood out from the pack were Bolan, Bowie, Slade and us. If you were in a band that didn't have that self-confidence, you didn't get noticed."

In those pre-breakthrough years, Sweet presumably spent plenty of hours in the Barley Mow, plotting against the 'men in suits' who sought to keep them in the shadows?

"Absolutely," Scott says emphatically. "There would have been a lot of skulduggery and Machiavellian thoughts – with Steve at the heart of it all. He always said: 'Each of them is earning what we earn.' That had to change."

The situation did change, but it took time. Having self-written and performed a run of wonderful, gonzoid bubblegum B-sides such as *Burn On The Flame, Someone Else Will* and *Rock & Roll Disgrace*, Sweet gradually severed ties with their puppetmasters, hence the title of 1975's *Strung Up*, a half-live and half-studio release that established the band's credentials as a fully-fledged, leather-clad hard rock outfit. To those that would listen, anyway.

The German market, where *Sweet Fanny Adams* went toe to toe with Deep Purple and *Burn* – and Scott topped Ritchie Blackmore in a poll of leading guitarists in rock – quickly became a stronghold for Sweet, which it remains today. Which explains why the band's latest *Full Circle* album includes a dandruff-shaker titled *Destination Hannover*.

On the day of our meeting, Scott is bursting with pride over the looming success of an album made, as he puts it, "from a standing start". Although the current Sweet line-up re-recorded *Desolation Boulevard* in lockdown as *Isolation Boulevard, Full Circle* is their first record of original material since *Sweetlife* back in 2002.

"*Full Circle* is already into its third pressing and it looks like it will go into the German chart," Scott says, and just for a moment that taking-on-the-world swagger of the 70s is back. "Last thing I heard, we're number fourteen and David Gilmour is number fifteen. That's not too bad, eh?"

As its title implies, *Full Circle* is very much promoted as a signing-off statement, and closes with an emotional title track that includes a spoken-word part from Scott, referencing the "stratospheric highs and profound lows" of his own life and the career of Sweet. Reviews across the board have voiced approval, with *Classic Rock*'s praising the variation of the music on it, from "chunky, boogie-infused glam-rock tunes" to 80s hair-metal and more than a smidgen of super-polished AOR. "Chinn and Chapman be damned. *Wig-Wam Bam* this isn't, [but] reliable rock'n'roll fun it remains," our verdict concluded.

"Well I knew that it *could* be our last, so it had to be a good one," Scott explains, slightly cagily. "Right now I don't know that it will be. The way I'm feeling, well… my wife and I had a long chat."

And you've changed your mind?

"It might kill me to be on the road, but it will certainly kill me to *not* be on the road. So I may as well keep things together, but that would involve more input and responsibility from the guys.

"The elephant in the room is that quite a few ≫

TOP: MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY; BOTTOM: GUNNAR BERGKRANTZ/ALAMY; INSETS: JORGEN ANGEL/GETTY x2

Sweet rehearsing in 1978: (l to r) Steve Priest, Mick Tucker, Andy Scott, Brian Connolly.

bands no longer have any original members. So I'm left wondering could there be a Sweet beyond me? And I don't know how to answer that."

Could/would you try?

"I'd probably be okay with it, but there would need to be someone to steer the ship. If I wasn't around then maybe guest guitar players could replace me? I haven't thought it all through yet. But Foreigner go out and tour without Mick Jones, and apparently it works very well."

Something similar has happened before. Back in 2015, Sweet announced a farewell tour, only for Scott to backtrack before its conclusion.

"I was going through something medical back then and it played on my mind, but yeah, I did alter that decision," he says. "Our current promoters in Germany really look after us. We travel well and stay in nice hotels. Given my age we play a little less than they as gig promoters would like, but it still works really well."

In some ways Sweet find themselves in the same boat as their old mates Uriah Heep, who recently announced a curtain call to their own 55-year run, but with the proviso that weekend gigs, one-offs and festival runs all remain possible.

"I've had that conversation with Mick Box," Scott says. "Both of us agreed that without playing live, what on earth would we do? So doing it sensibly remains the only option."

And that's what looks set to happen, with the band adding an April 2025 show at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire to a now traditional festive run across the UK, which was set to begin in Wolverhampton on December 16.

"Shepherd's Bush will be special, though," Scott promises. "I'm hoping to get some special guests on stage with us."

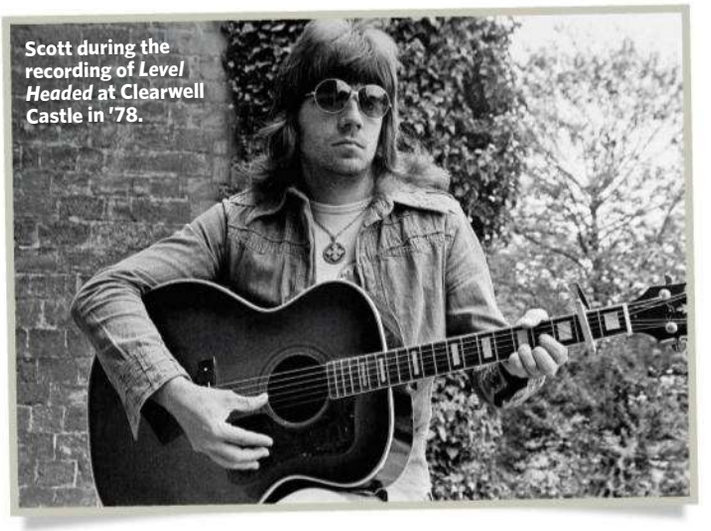
Whether or not Sweet will release the occasional track, as opposed to making full-length albums, only time will tell.

"I'm not saying that we'll do another album, but the success of this one changes my outlook," he offers. "If we were to release new songs individually, then why not scoop them all together into an album? So there *could* be another one."

"It might kill me to be on the road, but it will certainly kill me to *not* be on the road."

So much for *Full Circle* being a permanent full-stop on Sweet's recording career.

"Yeah," Scott responds gamely, "but you've got your scoop, haven't you?"


Scott during the recording of *Level Headed* at Clearwell Castle in '78.

Whether or not Scott's ill health will allow these possibilities remains uncertain. The spirit is strong but the flesh isn't always willing. This was our second attempt to get Scott to the Barley Mow for a chat, the first having been postponed when he felt under the weather. He's had good and bad days; a few weeks after our interview a run of German dates were postponed due to him suffering from sciatica. Later, he was forced to sit out Sweet's tour of Australia, which proceeded with local stand in Randall Waller. As this issue went to press, doctors forbade Andy to undertake Sweet's December shows in the UK, but they went ahead with FM's Jim Kirkpatrick helping out.

Since being diagnosed with cancer in September 2009, Scott made his fight with it as public as possible, staging Rock Against Cancer benefits and regularly advising fans to have their prostate checked.

In December of 2023, during a gig at Islington's Assembly Hall in London, he reduced a previously rowdy audience to silence when he revealed that the disease had reached the dreaded Stage Four and that he was "taking all the pills that I can", but "it's like the last stage of upgrading your Mac – you can't go back". Unable to resist some dark humour, he continued: "The hormone that I'm taking is a female one, which is why I seem to look at shoes a lot these days. I get hot flushes and find myself crying alone that all men are bastards." As the lights came up again, fans in the Assembly Hall appeared shell-shocked. Some were close to tears. This was very big and extremely unwelcome news.

"Let's not beat about the bush,

TOP: DICK BARNATT/GETTY; BOTTOM: DICK BARNATT/GETTY

Stage Four is bad," Scott says, still managing to sound pragmatic. And why shouldn't he? His isn't an aggressive form of cancer, and the doctors believe he could and should live to a ripe old age. Nevertheless, not long after that same London show he was prescribed new hormones, which disagreed with him.

"I had a horrible Christmas [in 2023], but now I'm okay although I tire easily," he reveals. "On stage during a long set, after forty-five minutes I've started to take a sit-down while the band plays without me."

The history of Sweet is as convoluted as it is long, with drummer Mick Tucker the only member of the 'classic' line-up not to have led his own incarnation of the band. These days, as the public face of Sweet, Scott is proud of his stewardship of the name. "It took plenty of work to get back to where we are now," he states. "For a while, the tax bills came to me. There were a million headaches."

Of the fallen three, Scott possibly misses Tucker the most. Together the pair reunited Sweet in the late 80s, and three sold-out shows at London's Marquee suggested – falsely, it transpired – a brave new future.

"Mick was a lovely guy, but his Jekyll-and-Hyde syndrome drove some of the other band members mad," Scott sighs. "That's why Phil Lanzon [keyboard player] left to join Uriah Heep."

Scott still cites the regrettable vocal injury suffered by Connolly during a pub car park punch-up as pivotal to Sweet's inability to take the next step up the ladder. Ultimately, it led to Connolly's drinking spiralling out of control and, eventually, his expulsion from the group. Everything came to a head during a US tour with Capitol labelmate Bob Seger, when band manager Ed Leffler pulled the sozzled Connolly from the stage at a gig in Atlanta, Georgia, leaving the other three to finish the show. The rest of tour was cancelled. When Sweet convened to make *Level Headed* at Clearwell Castle, where they'd recorded their last Top 10 hit, *Love Is Like Oxygen*, Connolly now had a minder to keep an eye on him. Not that it kept him out of trouble.

"One evening there was a thud on the roof of the mobile studio. Brian had jumped out of his window onto the parapet below and onto the van," Scott recalls, uncertain whether to laugh or cry. "After that he was known as Spiderman."

When Connolly shot a rifle to silence birds that were keeping him awake, shooting over the heads of disbelieving bandmates having a game of cricket, Scott recalls the manager of the Castle insisting: "You're leaving now."

When soon afterwards Connolly fled a drying-out clinic and was found in the nearest pub, as a group Sweet reached the conclusion that enough was enough. "I had to say: 'Brian, I love you, mate, but you are fucking up the band,'" Scott recalls sadly. "We didn't want to sack him, but there was no alternative."

Fans had hoped that as Sweet's last two survivors Scott and Steve Priest might put aside their issues to reunite. But although the ice thawed slightly before the bassist passed, it didn't happen.

"In California, Stevie had formed his own line-up of Sweet. I only found out when we mistakenly received a contract for some gig in the middle of nowhere in America," Scott explains. "I thought that was a bit cheeky."

Since Priest's death "the leftovers of his backing band", as Scott puts it – still performs live. "Musicians must earn a living, I get that, but I object to being badmouthed by people who were never in the original band," he comments dryly. "The respect for me is zero."

With Def Leppard's Joe Elliott, Gene Simmons from Kiss and the Crüe's Nikki Sixx all citing them as a primary influence, Sweet, conversely, now receive plenty of kudos. Despite the ups and downs of his career, Scott has no regrets.

"People ask why I never agreed to join another band, one notable example being when Sammy Hagar wanted a solid guitarist behind him," he reveals, "but I knew that if I left Sweet the band would disintegrate, and we still had unfinished business."

With retirement of one form or another now looming, what does the future hold for Andy Scott? An allotment, perhaps?

"Fuck off!" he retorts slightly spikily. "We might get another dog, and I'd like to go fishing a little more. I love watching Bob Mortimer and Paul Whitehouse's TV show, chatting by the riverside all day, and then going to the pub in the evening. What's not to love about that?"

Andy, you've earned it.

Full Circle is available via Metalville Records.

"My round." Scott at Sweet spot The Barley Mow in Paddington, London.

Still got a Sweet tooth: Scott with the band in Mannheim, Germany in 2018.

CENTRE: SIMON HOFMANN/GETTY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK TREMONTI

Take care of business. Quit your comfort zone. Don't listen to rock journalists. And never forget you could still be washing cars. Life advice from The Book Of Tremonti.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

Mark Tremonti is bang on time. Well, of course he is. The Detroit-born guitarist doesn't waste a single beat of his time; he's released no fewer than 19 albums while leading three bands in the form of Creed, Alter Bridge and his solo project ("Four bands," he corrects, flagging up his suited 'n' booted Sings Sinatra sideline).

Even on a rare day off from Creed's Are You Ready? tour, Tremonti is facing a mile-long call sheet of Zoom interviews to promote fiery new solo album *The End Will Show Us How*. Once he's done with those, he's got a dinner appointment with Sevendust's Lajon Witherspoon.

Doesn't this black-clad, alt.metal Duracell bunny ever stop moving? Tremonti smiles, shrugs and imparts the wisdom that underpins everything else he will offer today. "I won't feel like I've made it until I feel satisfied I've achieved everything. And there's still so much left to do."

THIS BUSINESS WILL EAT YOU UP IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL

"The music industry is tough and there's been a lot of ups and downs. When you're a kid, you don't want to disappoint anybody, so you don't question anything. You never want to say: 'Hey, this contract is seven records long – why should I do this?'

"I think the toughest moment for Alter Bridge was when we were trying to get out of our record deal for the second album [2007's *Blackbird*]. We had to pay off the loans it took to pay off that deal for most of Alter Bridge's career. Right up until covid hit we were still paying off debts. That was a tough lesson for us."

HE'S PAID HIS DUES

"I've had some of the physically toughest jobs. I worked at the Octopus Car Wash in Orlando back in high school, and that was the hottest job ever. Imagine being out there on that black asphalt all day. I worked as a busboy, then as a fry cook at Chili's – I still have the scars on my arms from all the grease flying out at me. Then I got a record deal and I got to quit that job. But I loved everybody I worked with at Chili's, so I had a lot of fun there too."

HATERS GONNA HATE

"When you start out as a musician, everybody says you're not going to make it. People take potshots at you. When you come out with your first single, they say you're gonna be a one-hit wonder. When you come out with your first successful record, they say you're gonna have a slump on your second one. I've always felt like I was fighting for survival in this business. It wasn't until we came out with *AB III* in 2010 that I was finally content with saying: 'I think I can do this as my career for as long as I want to.'"

IF HIS TEENAGE HOME WAS ON FIRE, METALLICA'S *MASTER OF PUPPETS* IS THE RECORD HE'D SAVE

"*Master Of Puppets* is the album that made me want to do this. Before that I was just into what everybody else listened to, like Beastie Boys' *Licensed To Ill*. I'd already started getting into guitar through simple stuff; like the J Geils Band would come on the radio with *Love Stinks*, that bit when it breaks down to just a guitar riff. But when I heard *Master Of Puppets*, that's when I was up all night."

"I've always felt like I was fighting for survival in this business."

HE'S NEVER SEEN THE USA THIS DIVIDED BEFORE

"I wrote the first song on my new solo album, *The Mother, The Earth & I*, after seeing everybody fighting over politics, fighting over religion – y'know, just fighting over everything these days. It's election day here in the United States and it's just been nuts. I've never seen so much bickering and arguing between folks. This is the first time in my career we've had a show the day after election day, and we've had to speak to the local police about civil unrest. It's a sad thing. Hopefully we'll bounce back, like we always do."

THERE'S A WEIGHT OF EXPECTATION WHEN YOU'RE A GUITAR HERO

"I joke about that with Myles Kennedy. I tell him: 'You love to play guitar solos, and I love to sing.' Because there's no pressure. When Myles plays a solo, everyone's like: 'Wow, the Alter Bridge singer is an awesome guitar player!' And when I sing they're like: 'Wow, I didn't think that guitar player could sing.' I remember Joe Bonamassa asked me to get up on stage when he came to Orlando. He's like: 'It'll be great, we'll do a slow blues.' And I'm like: 'That's the last thing I want to do, play a slow blues with one of the world's best blues players, in my home town, when ≫

CHUCK BRUECKMANN/PRESS

blues really isn't my strong suit.' When you're known for being a guitar player, you definitely have to make sure you're presenting yourself properly every moment. It takes that one bad night to have that video get out everywhere, because everybody has a cell phone."

THE WELL IS BOTTOMLESS

"Every time you feel like everything has already been done on guitar, somebody comes out with something new. Y'know, there was Eddie Van Halen, then Yngwie Malmsteen. Then Tom Morello came out and I remember thinking: 'What the hell is he doing with those guitar solos?' It's very hard to be that unique player these days, but it's still possible. Now, there's a new player called Matteo Mancuso who's blowing everybody's minds. I think he's gonna spark an entire new wave of guitar players."

TOO MUCH SUCCESS CAN BREAK A YOUNG BAND

"As a kid, Creed's success was hard to take on. There was some stress within the band itself. Each person has their group of talking heads telling them that they're the special one. It poisons the well. It was definitely tough to watch Scott [Stapp] go through his troubles, because sometimes when he was going through it I hadn't spoken to him in years. I think we're all way more mature now than we were then."

HE'S HAPPY ANYWHERE EXCEPT PLANES AND HOSPITALS

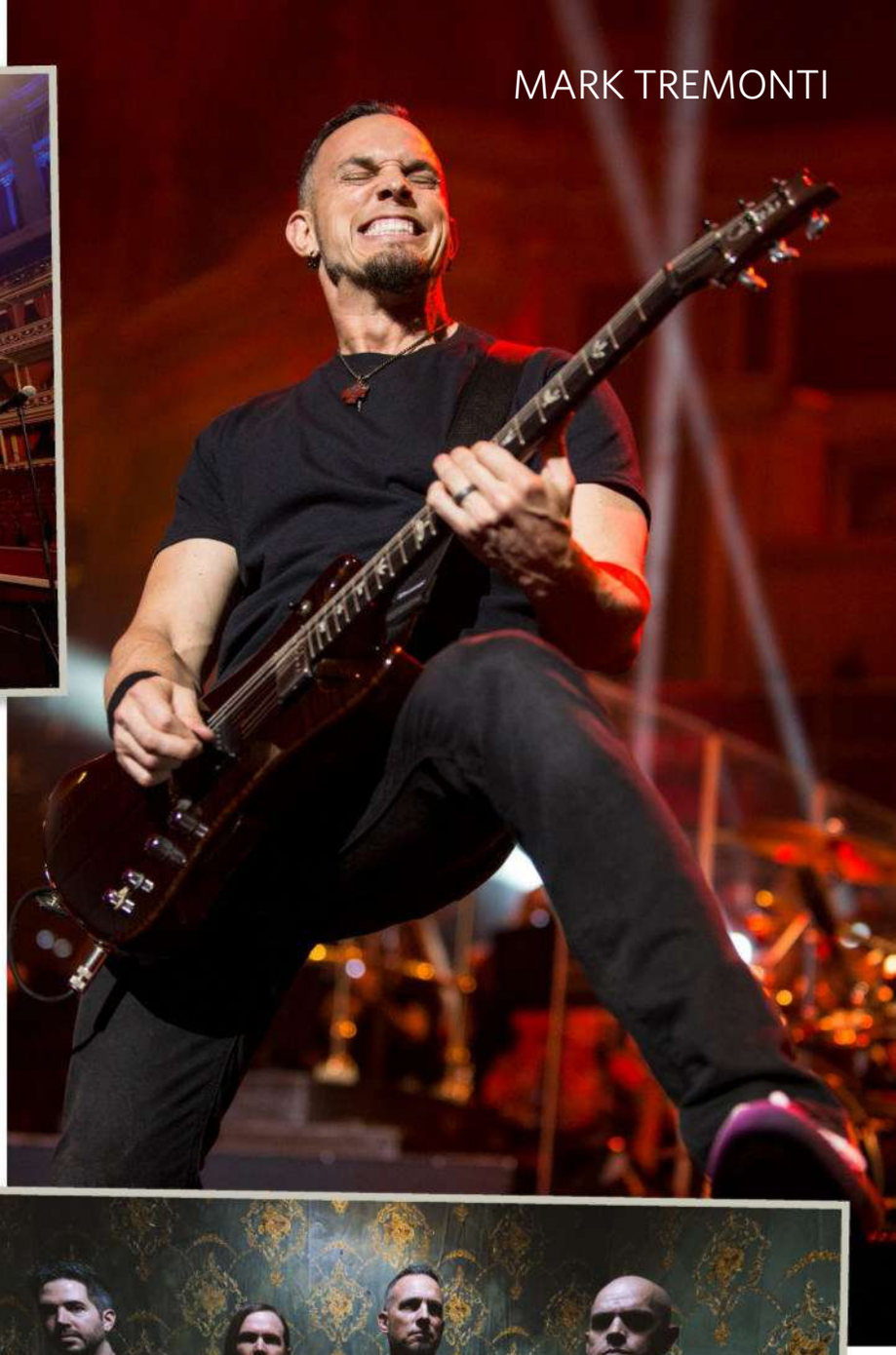
"I can't stand medical stuff. I hate having blood drawn, IVs, all that stuff. And as much as I travel, I hate flying. I used to love getting on planes, because I could read a book and didn't have to answer my phone. But one time we were in South America and spent about forty-five minutes in the middle of this lightning storm. The pilot wasn't speaking English, I had no idea what was going on, and my tour manager looked back from a couple of rows ahead and goes: 'Do you think we're gonna be okay?' I'm like: 'You turn your ass around! Don't make me more worried!'"

Above: suited and booted Tremonti channels Sinatra. Below: (second right) with Creed in 1999.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ ABOUT FRANK SINATRA

"It's a shame that when people talk about Frank Sinatra they talk about the affairs or whatever. My favourite stories are about how he would call up the Rat Pack [informal group of Hollywood-star entertainers]: 'Get over here and get on my plane.' 'Where are we going?' 'Don't ask me any questions, we're just going.' And when they landed, there'd be a private concert that would raise, like, half a million dollars for a fireman who got injured. No press would be allowed, because Frank didn't want anybody to know about it. I only know about it because of reading books about him. He'd fly around going to children's homes and hospitals for blind children. He raised over a billion dollars for charity."

MAIN: CHUCK BRUECKMANN/PRESS; BOTTOM: JOHN MCMURTRIE



"Out on tour I work 24 hours a day. I'm addicted to creating."

AT A BIOLOGICAL LEVEL, HIS HANDS AREN'T SO DIFFERENT FROM YOURS

"I think anybody who puts their mind to it can get faster at guitar playing. Things do not come easy for me. I've seen other players where techniques seem to come so easy, and it pisses me off that I have to work for three hours on something that takes them half an hour. But I feel like I've got a lot of gumption. If I want to do something, I will fail and fail until I get it, and I won't give up."

NOW AND THEN HE LIKES TO SWITCH OFF THE INTERNET

"There's definitely a lot of perks to the internet. YouTube is one of the greatest things in the world for learning guitar. But YouTube is definitely also a mystique killer. When I was a kid, I always wondered what a Slayer or King Diamond concert would be like, and how dangerous and awesome that must be. And when you can just find it on YouTube it kind of demystified it."

HE SCRUBS UP WELL IF HE WANTS TO

"I was at a Christmas party, and there was a karaoke machine. I started singing Sinatra tunes, and it felt good for my vocal range. Then I did a deep dive and came across a track called *The Song Is You* from the 1940s, where he just has this majestic voice. I told myself: 'I want to sing like that.' So for four hours a day I would listen to Sinatra songs on my laptop, typing in phonetically how he spoke the words and studying his phrasing, where he placed the vibrato. I created my own little scientific approach – and then I just practised my ass off.

"When I went up to record the album [*Mark Tremonti Sings Frank Sinatra*] with all these guys that Sinatra had performed with, I put on a suit. I remembered Bono saying: 'Frank doesn't like guys with earrings, but he liked me alright.' So I took out my earrings, and I've never found a need to put 'em back in."

HE DOESN'T CARE IF CRITICS GIVE CREED A HARD TIME

"It comes with the territory. If you get very successful with any project, you're gonna take some criticism. It's hard to find an artist that doesn't. Maybe somebody like Whitney Houston. But for everyone else, you'd better be able to take some hits along the way.

"It's been crazy to get back into Creed. We've done maybe forty-six shows this year and every single one has been sold out. Touring-wise, this is the biggest the band's ever been."

THE WORK IS NEVER DONE

"Out on tour I'm working twenty-four hours a day. One of my dreams is to become a published author. I just wrote an illustrated young adult book that I'm trying to get a deal for. That work ethic is just something I've always had. I'm addicted to creating. I think life's too short."

The End Will Show Us How is released on January 10 via Napalm Records.

Above left: Tremonti with Alter Bridge at London's Royal Albert Hall in 2017. Right: with his Tremonti band.

JOHN MCMURTRIE x2; BOTTOM: CHUCK BRUECKMANN/PRESS

SYMPHONY FOR THE DEVIL

With **Metallica**'s *S&M* reaching the grand old age of 25, we look back at how, and why, the world's leading metal band teamed up with – shock, horror – an orchestra. True, but not sad.

Words: **Mick Wall**

MICHAEL MACOR/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY

"I don't think we could have done this kind of project five years ago, because I don't feel that we had the balls to do it."

Lars Ulrich in 1999

For Metallica, the 90s were just like the 80s – only in reverse. The 10 years it took them to go from unloved New Wave Of British Heavy Metal copyists, when they formed in LA in 1981, to globe-straddling multi-platinum-selling rock titans on a sales-par with Michael Jackson and U2, with the release of their fifth album, *Metallica*, aka the Black Album, in 1991, saw them evolve faster than a speeding bullet. The move from hair-metal LA to anything-goes San Francisco, occasioned by bringing in SF natives, bassist Cliff Burton and guitarist Kirk Hammett; the sparking of a whole new genre in rock – thrash metal – and in its wake close-but-no-cigar imitators such as Megadeth and Slayer; the ability to fit comfortably onto the front covers *Kerrang!*, *NME*, the *Village Voice*, *Rolling Stone* and *The Times* of London, New York and LA; the death of Burton and the resulting exultation of a band afforded legend status before they'd even made a video; the conquering of first Britain then Europe then America then the rest of mankind.

They achieved all that between 1981 and 1991. Surely the next 10 years would follow a similarly skywards trajectory. All Metallica seemingly had to do was keep their eyes on the prize. Instead, they appeared to wilfully steer the great metal bird Metallica headlong into the ground, as they spent the 90s veering from one 'controversial' decision to another. First they cut their long hair short, applied garish make-up, and lost more than half their global audience with release of the provocative post-Black Album *Load* (1996) and, more contentiously still, *Reload* ('97). Had Metallica gone grunge? Had Metallica sold out? Didn't Metallica care about their metal-loving fans any more? What were Metallica thinking?

The answer to all those questions was: no. Metallica hadn't changed their thinking at all. If anything they were staying true to their nature, pushing boundaries, riding their lightning back out to the edge again; exploring those places – musical, cultural – no other metal band would have considered. It was their defining characteristic: a gift and a curse that made Metallica both the only 'thrash band' to successfully transcend their origins – and singled them out for special punishment when these experiments exploded in their faces.

By 1998, when Metallica were now giving serious consideration to recording a rock-meets-classical album with a symphony orchestra, it felt almost as though they were on a kamikaze mission to kill or at least badly maim their career. Couldn't they just make another one like the Black Album or, even better, *Master Of Puppets*? Another entirely thrash-based album the way Slayer and Megadeth and all the other comet-trailers did?

Actually, no they couldn't. The boy for whom nothing was ever quite enough, drummer Lars Ulrich, wouldn't let them. Instead the 90s became the beginning of what singer/guitarist James Hetfield later described with more than a hint of sarcasm as "the great reinvention of Metallica".

"It's not like we all went out together for a group haircut," said Lars, when I teased him about it. But in many ways that's exactly what they did do. It was one thing seeing Kirk Hammett showing off his new body tattoos and face piercings; essential-oil dabbing, comic-book collecting, dope smoking Kirk had always leaned that way. Looking at James Hetfield, though, once the poster boy for shit-kicking no-fucking-around heavy dude-ness, in his newly pompadoured hairdo and thick black eyeliner, sitting there in a tight white vest and smoking a cigar, it seemed as though the whole world had tipped upside down.

The only one somewhat off the pace, as usual, had been the irreplaceable Cliff Burton's replacement, Jason Newstead, who had cut his hair short some months before and was actually in the process of growing it back when the first *Load* publicity pictures were taken. For Jason, as with most hardcore Metallica fans, there was pushing the envelope, and then there was ➢

With strings attached – Metallica with the San Francisco Symphony at the Berkeley Community Theater, April 1999: (l-r) Jason Newsted and James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett, James Hetfield.

tearing it to pieces and tossing it in the air like confetti. For Jason, it was as though Lemmy had suddenly walked on stage wearing a long evening gown and tiara. Actually, it was more shocking than that. Lemmy would clearly have been joking; Metallica clearly were not.

As Lars explained: "I'm the one who will go and find out what goes on in Oasis-land or Guns N' Roses-land or Alice In Chains-land. I'm so curious to see how other bands do things. It's fun to sit down with Liam Gallagher and talk complete and utter nonsense about music."

Musically, Kirk had also moved on. Not like Lars, into the emotional quicksand of grunge or the peacocking of Britpop, but towards more leftfield musical innovators such as Nine Inch Nails, Aphex Twin and The Prodigy, groups who positioned themselves as musical emissaries of the near future.

"You can only be what the public thinks you are for so long before it becomes boring," Kirk remarked. Since the phenomenal success of the Black Album, he had "begun to feel quite objectified".

It would become this mutual desire to multiply the range of Metallica's inspirations that now drew the drummer and guitarist closer together. Both recently divorced, and more intent on "seeing what's out there", as Lars put it, their newfound bond also had the side effect of making James feel more isolated from the group's central purpose. Kirk would later disingenuously characterise this period as "playing referee" between Lars and James, but the fact is he was never closer to Lars – or further away from James – than now.

By default, both James and Jason now became the metal purists of the band. For the first time, James was starting to see Jason's side of things. "Why did we get him in the band if we didn't like him?"

Nothing prepared them, though, for what Lars suggested next: a two-CD live album, recorded with the 90-piece San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the album punningly titled *S&M* (aka Symphony And Metallica). An ambitious collaborative project, arranged and conducted by celebrated film-score composer Michael Kamen, recorded over two nights at the Berkeley Community Theater, in April 1999, that presented a selection of Metallica songs rearranged for group and orchestra.

A metal band performing their music with a classical orchestra? James and Jason thought the whole thing ludicrous. Lars and Kirk pressed ahead with it.

It had been done before, of course, notably by Lars's beloved Deep Purple, whose 1969 performance with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at London's Royal Albert Hall had resulted in Purple's live double album *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*. Two years before, the Moody Blues melded the two into their *Days Of Future Past* album. The 70s was prime rock-meets-classical territory; led by prog-rock 'virtuosos' like Rick Wakeman, whose 1974 album *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* combined rock ensemble, symphony orchestra and choir. Emerson, Lake & Palmer toured America with a full orchestra. More recently, Roger Waters had performed Pink Floyd's *The Wall* in Berlin with an East German symphony orchestra. Even the Scorpions had recorded an album with an orchestra, *Moment Of Glory*, which followed just months, in fact, after *S&M*.

Kamen, a 51-year-old American orchestral composer, conductor and arranger, had also worked previously with Pink Floyd, Queen, Eric Clapton, and David Bowie. It was after Kamen's original introduction in 1991 by Metallica producer Bob Rock, who'd invited him

Michael Kamen (centre) with Metallica at the 1999 Billboard Music Awards.

MICHAEL MACOR/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY X2; BOTTOM: CHRIS WALTER/GETTY

MICHAEL MACOR/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY

to score an orchestral arrangement for *Nothing Else Matters*, that Kamen first suggested to Lars "some sort of collaboration". Eight years later he got his wish.

According to Kamen, the idea was "to create a dialogue between two worlds that celebrate the power of music". Apart from the financial motivation, which was certainly significant – the chance to record another five-million-selling album out of two nights' live recording, along with the attendant redirection of buyers once again towards the band's back catalogue – it was never really clear what Metallica actually hoped to achieve from the collaboration.

Kamen dutifully studied Metallica's music for six months – the equivalent, he reckoned, of completing three film soundtracks – and scored arrangements for 21 of their songs, including two new Hetfield/Ulrich compositions: *No Leaf Clover* and *Human*. There was also a new arrangement of Ennio Morricone's *The Ecstasy Of Gold* (part of the soundtrack to *The Good The Bad And The Ugly*) which had opened Metallica shows for years.

An initial rehearsal with the SFSO's principal players was followed by two lengthy dress rehearsals with both band and full orchestra at the venue – for which harpist Douglas Roth arrived on a motorcycle, his tattooed arms clutching some Metallica CDs he wanted them to sign.

"There's always [some] snotty old bastards giving you the evil eye, like: 'Fuck, you guys are cavemen. Your music sucks,'" James complained. "But there were others that understood what we were trying to do; they could see that we fucking mean this shit, man. We have a passion in our music and our music is our life. They just grew up learning it different. They studied theory, and we studied UFO *Live*."

As Kirk later said, however, Metallica's interest in all forms of music, whether strictly metal or not, went all the way back to their former bass player Cliff Burton's lasting influence on the band. "Cliff liked Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel, he loved classical music and especially Bach, he was the one always pushing to try something new."

"It would be fun to take [the orchestra] on tour and watch them fall into the debauchery hole and completely turn into rock ruins."

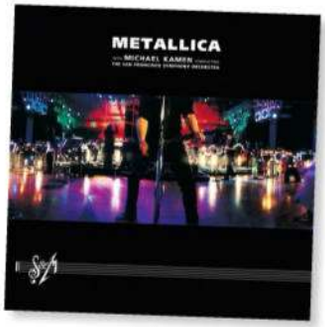
James Hetfield

The Berkeley Community Theatre had a longstanding reputation for staging rock artists in concert, and many were recorded and released as live albums, including artists of the stature of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Led Zeppelin and Frank Zappa, to name just a few. Its rust-coloured auditorium and green psychedelically swirling carpet were little changed from the heady days when guest speakers there included Lenny Bruce, Timothy Leary and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Outside they erected a large tent, which served as a temporary backstage area, including portable balustrades still wrapped in plastic. Lighting designer John Broderick was overheard explaining his strategy for the dramatic overture to Kamen: "You come on and it's bland-bland-bland. The orchestra starts up and it's bland-bland-bland. James comes on – bland-bland-bland. Then Jason comes on – bland-bland-bland. Then Lars hits the first drum beat, and BOOM! It's the Fillmore, 1968."

"Ah," Kamen said, smiling. "So that was you. I simply assumed I was having a flashback."

"Even without these shows," Lars conceded, "I couldn't have imagined at nineteen what my life would be like at thirty-five – being married, having a baby boy, the way my Motörhead records are gathering dust. I love to embrace ageing, especially because in rock'n'roll it's such a negative thing to talk about. I know it's a cliché in rock'n'roll to say 'We do whatever the fuck we want,' but I believe I can say it, for the first time, a hundred per cent truthfully. I don't think we could have done this kind of project five years ago, because I don't feel that we had the balls to do it."



The shows themselves were a mixture of the sublime (witness the bow-tied orchestra member waving his tuba around in acknowledgement of the sea of devil-horn signs) to the ridiculous (see the goth girl in tight red vinyl dress,

Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett power through a Metallica classic, with plenty of blow behind them.

"Cliff [Burton] liked Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel, he loved classical music and especially Bach, he was the one always pushing to try something new."

Kirk Hammett

standing on her seat waving her black-gloved arms above her head in some strange invocation). Beware the colossal Hells Angel, doing anything he damn well pleases while the orchestra saw away at *Sad But True*.

Suddenly the days of Metallica tours featuring "the biggest cocaine mirror on the planet" on which a 20-foot line was carefully chopped into scoops as a treat for the crew, were over.

"If I felt that I could actually get the orchestra to snort speed and smash up their instruments," a grinning Lars said, "I would."

James claimed to be only dimly aware of the orchestra once the show started. "We don't have them turned up in our monitors because they're doing such wild, crazy and awesome things that it would really throw me off. But when the floor rumbles all of a sudden, I know something right is happening."

To promote the *S&M* album and filmed-in-concert DVD, released in November 1999, Metallica also performed single concerts with orchestras in Berlin and New York. Questioned after the Berlin show, though, James laughed it off. When they were first presented with the idea, he said, "we thought: 'Fuck, that's got failure written all over it. It's like fucking in church. Let's do it!'"

Playing the whole thing down still further, he added: "It would be fun to take [the orchestra] on tour and watch them fall into the debauchery hole and completely turn into rock ruins. Taking them on the road and watching one beer turn into five beers and all of a sudden they're in jail, divorced and hooked on heroin and smashing their cellos on stage."

The two new songs – *No Leaf Clover* and *Human* – were also impressive, both more genuinely experimental than anything from the *Load* – *Reload* period, *Clover* a swaggering, emotional trial-by-fire with band and orchestra meshing to spectacular effect; *Human* a sweeping, atmospheric piece that somehow allows oboe and keyboards to sit snugly alongside the explosive guitars, drums and treated vocals.

The remaining 17 tracks, however, often highlight what an odd, difficult fit the two highly emotive forms of music make: *One* sounds neutered, *Enter Sandman* simply a mess. Even *Nothing Else Matters* – Kamen's original entry point into Metallica's music – sounds lacklustre, perfunctory. Others, such as *Hero Of The Day*, work better but only because the orchestra tends to be more in the background. Ultimately, what may well have been a unique live experience becomes, on record and DVD, more like a beautifully shot home movie: fascinating for those who were there; something that doesn't really stand up to repeated listening/viewing for those who weren't.

Reviews of *S&M* were predictably lukewarm. In Britain, *Q* magazine was avuncular, describing it as "another just about forgivable flirtation with Spinal Tap-esque lunacy". *Rolling Stone* claimed the album "creates the most crowded, ceiling-rattling basement rec room in rock… The effect is… one of timelessness." Later, however, the magazine changed its mind, describing *S&M* as Metallica's "very worst disc… just as useless as every other album on which a rock band plays their hits with an orchestra".

Nevertheless, Metallica had another US No.1 album. In Britain, however, *S&M* didn't even make the Top 30. *No Leaf Clover* was the only single from the album, but that wasn't a hit even in America.

If as recording artists Metallica were now beginning to take on the appearance of jaded old gods, as concert masters they were still considered a top-drawer ticket, as monolithic and unmissable as the pyramids. So what if they would never make another album as good as *Master Of Puppets* or as popular as the Black Album, who cared if they had mislaid the plot artistically, they still kicked ass live, right, dude?

Looming on the millennial horizon: Jason quitting; suing Napster; the *St Anger* debacle; *Some Kind Of Monster*.

Compared to that, *S&M* seemed charming, almost innocent. Almost.

MICHAEL MACOR/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY

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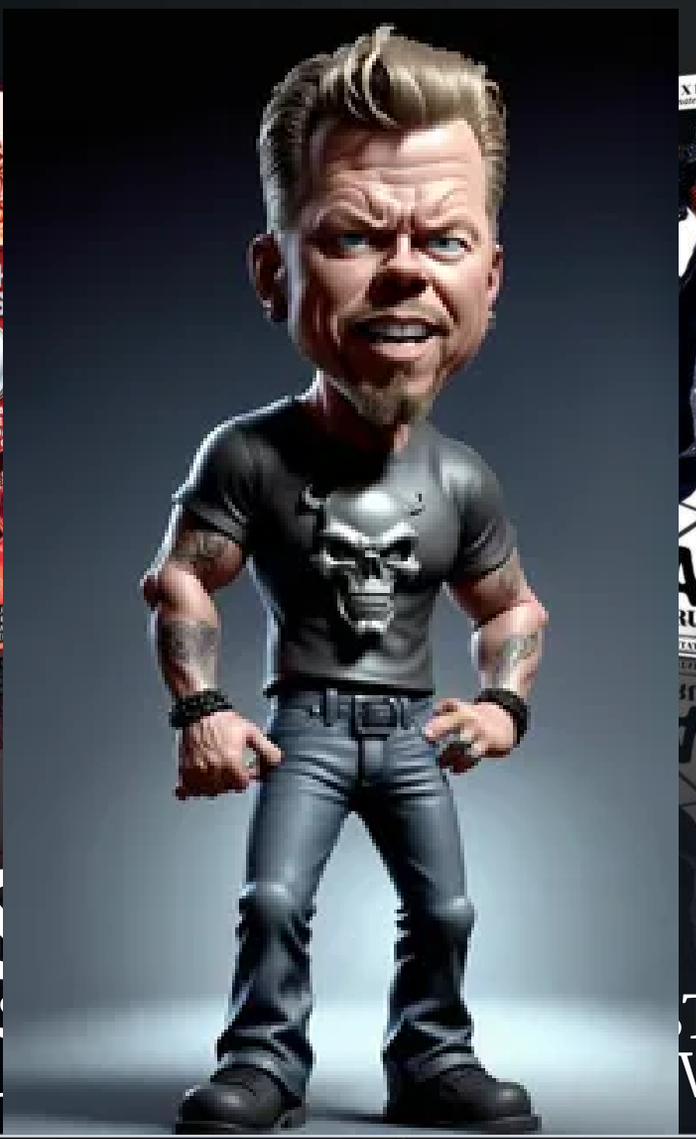

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EVER MEET LEMMY?

He was a pop star in the 60s, and toured and played with Hendrix. He's played guitar for George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Roger Waters and more and is still in demand. And yes, he did meet Lemmy. He's Andy Fairweather Low, and these are some of his stories.

Interview: **Jo Kendall**

Affable Welshman Andy Fairweather Low first gained attention fronting the cutesy pop-rock band Amen Corner in the mid-60s. From their ashes came a proggy outfit called Fair Weather in 1970. Soon after, he was solo, and toasted a big hit single with the soft-rocking *Wide Eyed And Legless* in 1975. But Fairweather Low's agility as a singer/guitarist sideman connected him to peers including Eric Clapton, and he's had a long career as superstar support for Roger Waters, George Harrison and Bill Wyman, among others. As a teen he learned the ropes with songs such as Bessie Smith's *Gin House Blues*, which Amen Corner covered for their first single release. Bringing him full circle, the song is included on his latest album, *The Invisible Bluesman*, a collection of vintage covers.

ERIC CLAPTON

I was a big fan of Eric and used to have a poster of him in Blind Faith at Hyde Park up on my wall. When I was in Amen Corner I decided I was never going to be good enough to be him, but I could make a living pretending to be Steve Cropper. Then when I got my solo deal with A&M, my second album [*La Booga Rooga*] was produced by Glyn Johns, a really good friend. He then produced Eric's album *Slow Hand* [1977] while I happened to be staying at his house. I met Eric then, and during the recording of *Backless* I was sitting in the control room being a pest and a fan. I was having trouble with my label. Glyn told Eric, and he sent me a telegram of encouragement. I couldn't believe it. Eric asked me if I'd join him in the winter of 1990 to 1991, at the Albert Hall. I went: "You serious?" This was a life-changing moment. I'd work with Eric for thirteen years. I loved it – all the sound-checks, the rehearsals, the album recordings. I love his voice, too. And he's introduced me to so many fabulous musicians. I'm so proud of what we've done together.

PETE TOWNSHEND

I first saw Pete with The Who in 1965/66, as a punter at the Porthcawl Pavilion. He is one of my all-time heroes. I was staying with Glyn Johns while he was working on *Who Are You*. Pete said: "Tell Andy to come and do some backing vocals." I did about five tracks, the first being the title track. In 1993, while Pete was drying out in the US, I was asked to join The Who for a few months until he came back. When he returned, I stayed on, but after a few days I realised I wasn't needed so I said: "I think I'll go and play tennis." Then Pete's *Psychoderelict* album came out in 1993, and he asked me to tour with him in America. That was a really interesting event, a musical with actors like Jan Ravens. I learned a lot from Pete with his chord shapes and songwriting.

GEORGE HARRISON

I could never get "Wow, he's a Beatle!" out of my head when I was working with him. It all started after his manager, Roger Forrester, had been in touch to tell me that George would like me to play slide guitar during his Japanese tour. I said: "I don't play slide because I can't be as good as Ry Cooder. Give me George's number to explain." I rang George and he said, "I've never heard you play, but everybody seems to like you so why not come and see me at [Harrison's Victorian mansion] Friar Park?" So I did. At that time things were not going well for me and I was driving a Volkswagen Polo. He came out to meet me and said: "You have to drive *that*?" and we started laughing. He then suggested playing something from [Harrison's album] *Living In The Material World*. I had painted a bungalow to that soundtrack, I knew it inside out. We began with *Give Me Love* and I sang the slide part. When we went on tour, he got me doing the slide to *My Sweet Lord*. I could never relax until I got past that part. He had a fantastic sense of humour and he was unbelievably easy to be with.

ROGER WATERS

In November 1967, Amen Corner played our first tour ever on a bill with Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, The Move, The Nice, Heir Apparent and Outer Limits. We were all in one bus apart from Floyd, who travelled on their own. Our manager, Ron King, overheard one of them say something about our keyboardist Blue Weaver, and he threatened to break their legs. They'd open with *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*, and it would completely baffle me, like: "What are they doing?" One day in around 1984 I get a call: "Hello, Andy, it's Roger Waters." Who? I hadn't paid attention to their names. He asked me to come up and see how we got along, with a tour for *The Pros And Cons Of Hitchhiking* in mind. I went to see him, and we didn't just get along, we talked all about the tour. I played with him for about twenty-four years. He treated me with unbelievable respect, was superb company and very funny. And you know what? *Set The Controls* became my favourite thing to play live [laughs]!

BB KING

I was in Los Angeles in the eighties for a record company meeting, went to a club, and BB was playing there. I stayed behind and got ➢

“George Harrison had a fantastic sense of humour. He was unbelievably easy to be with.”

Andy Fairweather Low with Eric Clapton at the latter's Crossroads Guitar Festival at NYC's Madison Square Garden April 12, 2013.

his autograph. All of a sudden, Eric's gonna do an album with him, *Riding With The King*, and we go out to Santa Monica. The hotel's on the beach, I get to go in the studio for a month, and every day BB King is in there. The whole time I was there he never called me by my name. It was enough to be part of it in the band. To use a Roger analogy, he was one of the first bricks in the wall.

JOE SATRIANI

I was playing at the Fillmore West on a blues tour with Eric and, unbeknown to me, Joe was in the audience. Glyn Johns was going to record a live-in-the-studio album with him [self-titled, 1995], and Joe had never recorded live. Glyn suggested me as rhythm guitarist. I went: "Joe Satriani? Me?" Glyn said: "I think you can do this." I said: "Give me his number!" I called and said: "Joe, you *do* know what I do…" And Joe was like: "Yeah, I saw you with Eric."

I end up in the studio with him, about four feet away, and I can't *think* as fast as he can play. Phenomenal control, knowledge, and a lovely man too. He showed me a part for the track *Luminous Flesh Giants* that went 'da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da', then he's off somewhere else. But I thought to myself: "I can do the da-da-da-da bit!" I could also do a part that was one note for the track *Killer Bee*. I arrived with a certain amount of guitar noises that I had, and I thank Joe for holding my hand with that record.

"I told Tom Jones: 'Finally, you got to sing with *me*!'"

TOM JONES

In all my time on the circuit from the 1960s, I never bumped into Tom Jones at all. In 2015 I get a call from Ethan Johns, Glyn's son, who's doing an album, *Long Lost Suitcase*, with Tom. He would like me to play guitar on it. Yeah, absolutely! It was bluesy, soulful, a bit of rock, a step away from *Delilah*, or *It's Not Usual* – which I bloody love, by the way. We went to Free House studio in Bristol, owned by James Dyson's son Sam, incredible place. We recorded like they might have done in the fifties; I'd sit by my amp, and Tom would be in the middle of the room on an old RCA mic. I did backing vocals on one of the tracks. Tom has sung with Little Richard, everyone. I told him: "Finally, you got to sing with *me*!" [laughs]. A warm, down-to-earth man to play with, and Ethan captured some of my best guitar work.

EDIE BRICKELL & PAUL SIMON

One of the connections I had through Eric was with Steve Gadd. Steve had worked for twenty-five years or more with Paul Simon.

Above right: Andy Fairweather Low with Roger Waters during his *The Dark Side Of The Moon* tour, at Philips Arena in Atlanta, Georgia, May 22, 2007.

He knew Paul's wife Edie, and was going to produce an album for her. He said: "Do you fancy being on it?" So there's me, Steve on drums and bassist Pino Palladino – another proud Welshman – and we're called The Gaddabouts. We do one album [self-titled, 2011], then we do another [*Look Out Now!!*, 2012]; Edie is the most prolific writer. Most of the stuff I played, the riff came from her.

One time, I lost my porkpie hat, a treasured possession, travelling to New York from Heathrow. Paul Simon comes into the session and says: "Andy, where's your hat?" I told him I lost it on the train. Four days later, Edie says: "Someone wants to see you, go outside." It's Paul, and he's got a couple of hats which he tries on my head. "That's your size," he says. And he gets this company in New York to make me a hat! He also came in to record with the harmonica from *The Boxer*, which I played for a fairly simple part. I had to gaffa tape the holes to make sure I played the right notes.

JIMI HENDRIX

On tour with him in 1967, I was nineteen and witnessing this thing first-hand, two shows a day. Sometimes, when he got to *Wild Thing* at the end of the night, tuning-wise it was wild. Amen Corner had residencies in London at Blazes, Tiles and The Speakeasy, playing soul and R&B. If you were in a band, you'd hang out there. One night Jimi was there and decided to play *I Can't Turn You Loose*, with us. He borrowed Clive [Taylor]'s bass, turned it upside-down and took it from there. A few months later he got up and played Neil Jones's guitar. I decided to play bass, until he turned around and said I was playing in the wrong key. I had no idea what key it was in!

A little later, I'm in New York, staying with our manager Terry The Pill, who worked for Hendrix's manager Mike Jeffery. We get a call – could I come to the studio to do some backing vocals? When I go over, Jimi's recutting *Stone Free* and Roger Chapman's there. So you have Larry The Lamb and Archie Andrews on backing vocals. Jimi was a quiet, lovely, polite man.

LEMMY

He was the roadie for Hendrix when we were on tour, but I didn't find that out until later. Many years on, I was at the 100 Club [in London]. He was at the bar, I was at the bar, and we said hello. Lemmy was totally himself and could connect with anyone.

The Invisible Bluesman is out now via The Last Music Company.

CLAPTON: EVAN AGOSTINI/ALAMY; CHRIS MCKAY/ALAMY

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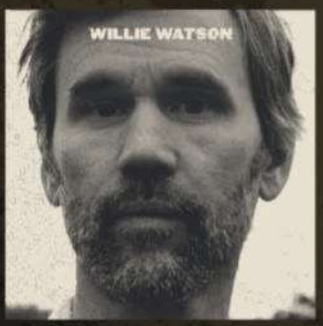

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The HOT List

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

WHITNEY OTTE/PRESS

Welcome to our first Hot List of 2025! With the festive season pretty much over, the last of the wrapping paper cleared away and the smell of party poppers fading, we could probably all use a bit of rock'n'roll in our lives. Partly it's a tonic for the soul during the grey, skint, hungover days of January, but it's also a way of setting an invigorating tone for the year – start as you mean to go on and all that.

With that in mind, we've brought you a selection of tunes to kickstart your 2025. So dive in and fill your head with sounds to (by turns) soothe, energise and delight. And as ever, check out more new music every week at **classicrockmagazine.com**

The Struts *Can't Stop Talking*

The Struts had a lot of fun making latest single *Can't Stop Talking*, and you can tell. Luke Spiller, here at his most Jagger-esque, sings and regales like he's still mid-flow at one of the many parties that apparently informed this toe-tapping, arse-shaking new choon. Think old-school bluesy rock'n'roll sass, slicked up with pulsating contemporary pop beats and production finishes, like a new-gen Rolling Stones on a particularly fruitful caffeine kick. There's also word of a new solo album in the works from Spiller, so watch this space.

thestruts.com

Orianthi
Some Kind Of Feeling

She's been cultivating a solo catalogue since her teens – by turns bluesy, gnarly, poppy… – and played with Alice Cooper, Steve Vai, Prince, Richie Sambora and many more while she was at it. Now Greek/Aussie-turned-LA guitar star Orianthi strikes a soulful bounce with *Some Kind Of Feeling*. Produced by Kevin Shirley, and the first of more to come with her new album (coming out in this year), it finds her hitting a sweetly breezy yet biting blues-rock guitar stride, teamed with rich, sunkissed vocals.
orianthi.me

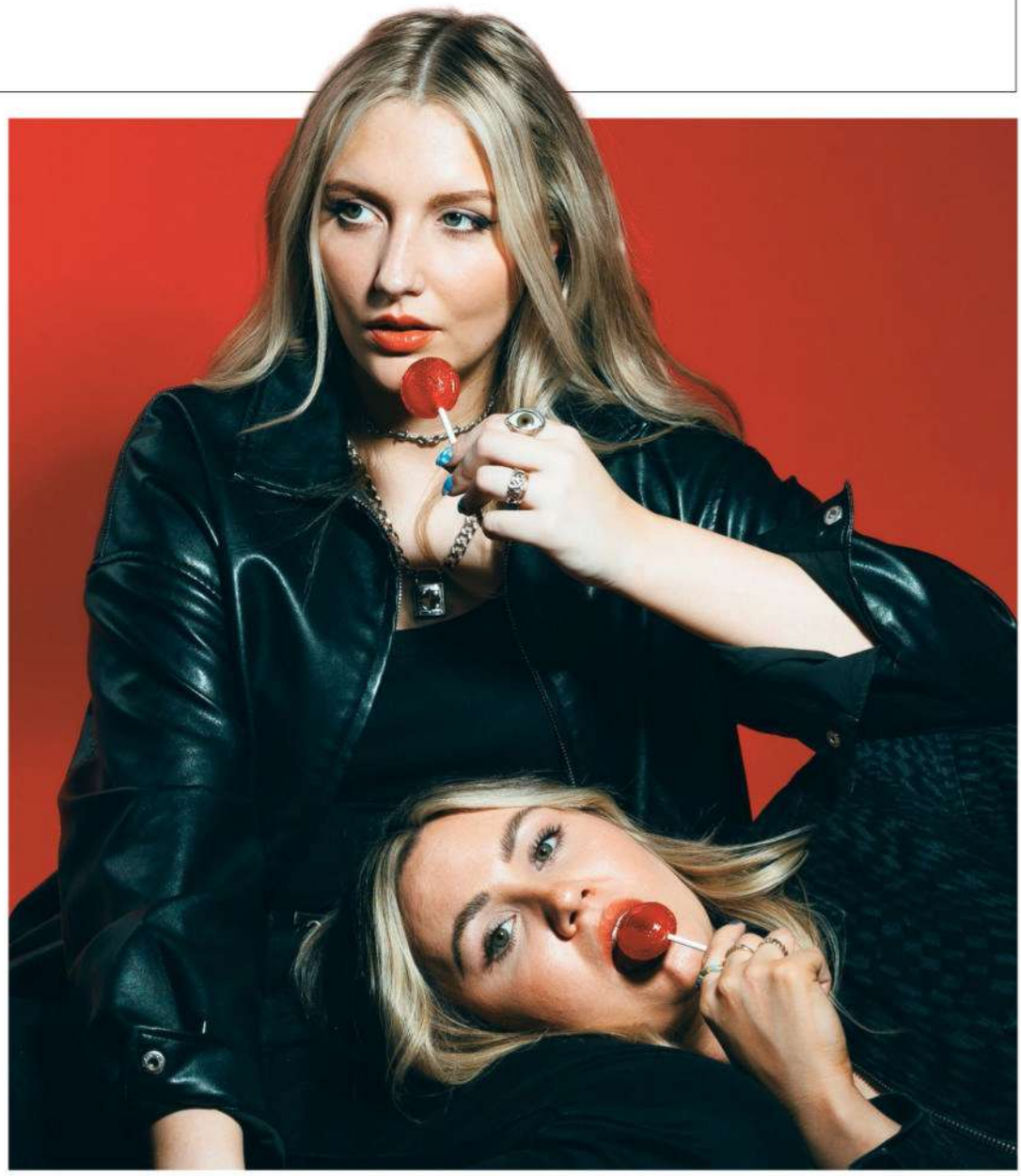
Pøltergeist *Children Of The Dark*

With a name like that you might expect this Canadian trio to be the metalliest of metal bands. It's not a totally misleading impression, but while there is a nicely familiar old-school heavy streak (think Angelwitch and Blue Öyster Cult) to their sound, Pøltergeist sit far more comfortably in the smoky post-punk territory of The Cure and Cocteau Twins, as evidenced on this beautifully gothic, enveloping yet catchy taste of their recently released debut album *Nachtmusik*.
poltergeistovdoom.bandcamp.com

Himalayas *What If…?*

They've opened for Foo Fighters, Manic Street Preachers and Stereophonics, and now rising Welsh rockers Himalayas kick some serious arse on their terms with *What If…?*. You can definitely hear all that big-name, arena-sized experience here. Part thumping Royal Blood groovefest, part dark-hearted meditation on the uncertainty of life (and our relative powerlessness in the face of it), it's got nicely shadowy, woozy edges but always comes out fighting. Definitely ones to watch out for in 2025.
himalayasofficial.com

ORIANTHI: ALEX BROWN/PRESS; PØLTERGEIST: SHANE REMPEL/PRESS; HIMALAYAS: ANDY FORD/PRESS



Dirty Blonde
Northern Twang

Manchester rockers Dirty Blonde opened for the Sex Pistols with Frank Carter in 2024, and now they're making a groovy, garage-fried noise of their own, with *Northern Twang* paving the way for more good stuff to come in 2025. Imbued with an appealing mix of noisy urgency and deadpan swagger, its hookiness is invitingly old-school – a bit Norman Greenbaum's *Spirit In The Sky*, a bit ZZ Top's *La Grange* – but with a contemporary indie edge and silky vocal purrs.
facebook.com/wearedirtyblonde

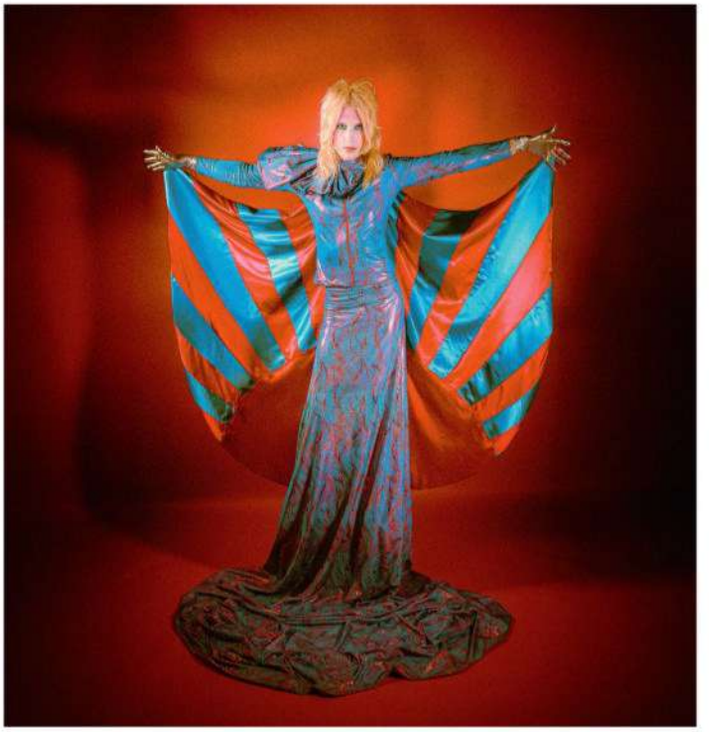
Jonathan Hultén
Afterlife

One for the more introspective moments of the month, but in a quietly uplifting way. Described as 'ambient dream-grunge' and complimented by a beautifully witchy aesthetic, the former guitarist with Swedish metallers Tribulation has turned an enigmatic corner since going solo in 2020. Hard to pigeonhole but very easy to get lost in, he scooped up a load more fans on tour with The Cult in 2024, winning them over with dark, delicate swirls like the velvet-cloaked *Afterlife*. Intrigued? Find more on his new album *Eyes Of The Living Night*, which comes out on January 31.
jonathanhulten.com

DIRTY BLONDE: DEBBIE ELLIS/PRESS; JONATHAN HULTÉN: MORGAN TÄRNSTRÖM

Chris Tapp
Old Lady Blues

There's something of the late, great Louisiana blueser Brother Dege in this first sample of The Cold Stares frontman's new solo album *Green* – so-titled because all the songs were played on an old National resonator guitar that belonged to another late, great bluesman, Peter Green. Imbued with the sort of sparse, haunting atmosphere and hypnotic Delta blues that come out so beautifully from a guitar like this (in the right hands, of course) *Old Lady Blues* has piqued our curiosity for the rest.
thecoldstares.com



Gyasi *Sweet Thing*

On Sweet Thing (taken from his upcoming album *Here Comes The Good Part*) West Virginia's androgynous prodigal son embraces the 70s flavours that drove him out of the woods, onto the stage and, ultimately, to Nashville. But there's a pang of his early life, too. From the old-school production to the glam-booted guitars (think *Rebel Rebel* with a more minor-key heart), hippie-fied acoustic strums and Bowie-meets-Bolan vocals, it finds Gyasi channelling his formative influences through a story about embracing your true self, regardless of how it's received by those around you. He's been there, he gets it.
gyasimusic.com

And keep an ear out for... Those Damn Crows

Those Damn Crows have long worn their hearts on their sleeves, in the form of punchy, searing hard rock songs. The first sample of their next album, *God Shaped Hole* (coming out in April), finds the Bridgend band of brothers leaning into their pop-rock side, with a touch of R.E.M., as they continue to artfully bottle unvarnished human feelings. "The whole premise of that song is: 'I'm going to tell it like it is, flaws and all,'" frontman Shane Greenhall says. "I can be anxious, I can be unstable when sometimes it looks like I got my shit together, and have all the answers. I've been hurt and broken – who hasn't got a glass heart? But it's okay, because we're still here, we're still fighting."
thosedamncrows.com

THOSE DAMN CROWS: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS; GYASI: SCOTT WILLIS/PRESS

DISCOVER THE STORY BEHIND A TRUE MUSIC ICON

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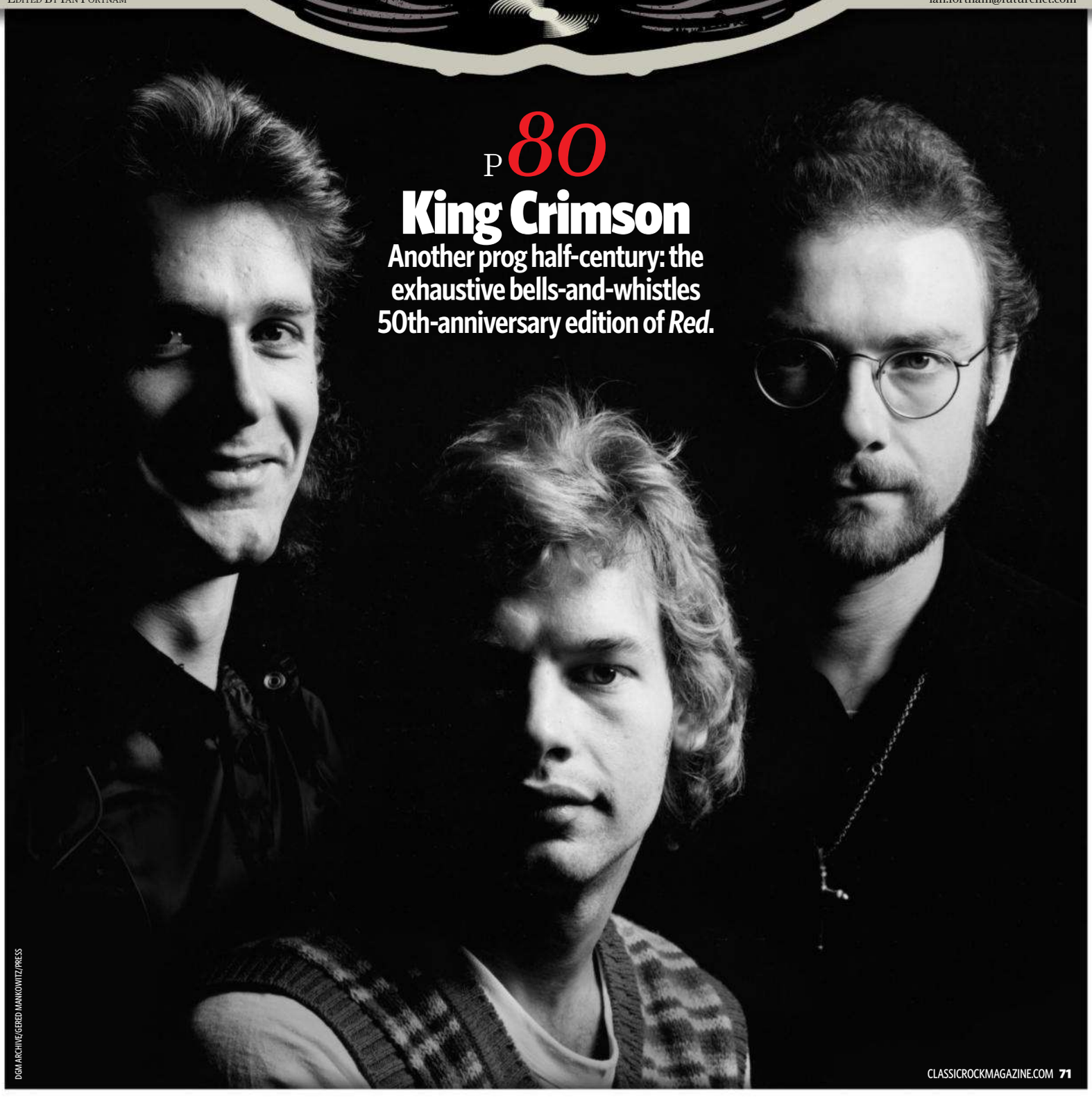
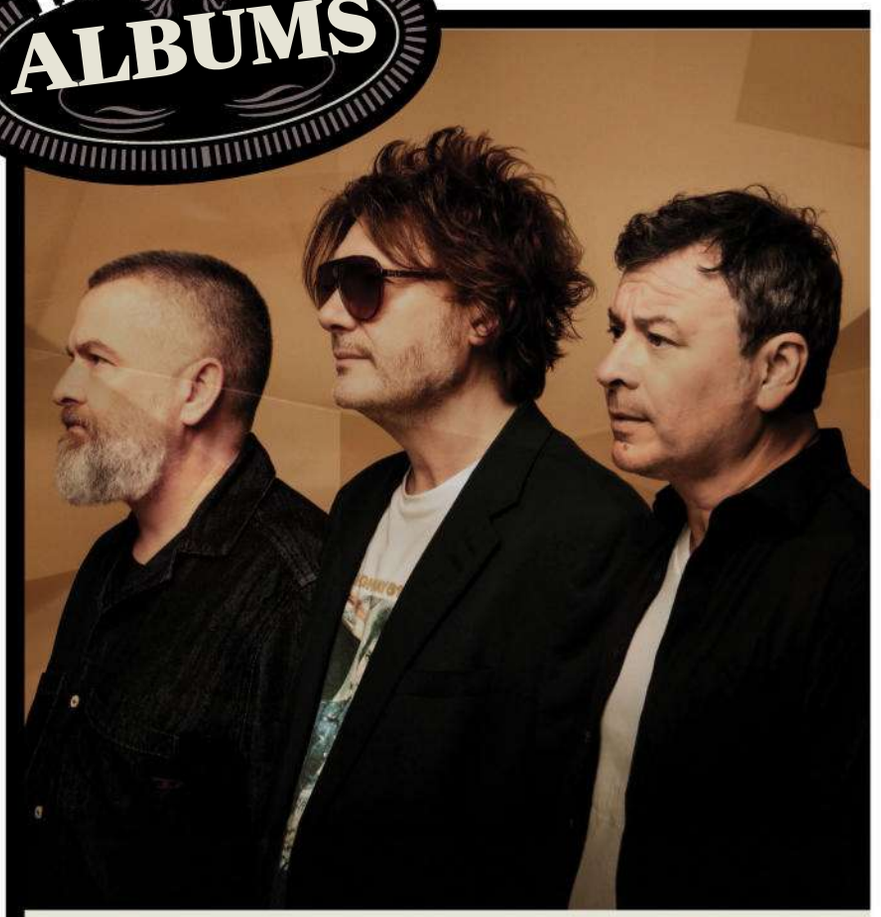
King Crimson

Another prog half-century: the exhaustive bells-and-whistles 50th-anniversary edition of *Red*.



DGM ARCHIVE/GERED MANKOWITZ/PRESS

The Hard Stuff Albums



Manic Street Preachers

Critical Thinking *COLUMBIA*

"Even our dreams are intellectual..."

So which Manic Street Preachers do we get this time? Is it the widescreen Manics, with their terrace anthems and Technicolor bleakness? Or is it the post-punk Manics, all terse, screaming riffs, balaclavas and slogans like a very cold Clash? The answer with *Critical Thinking* is neither. With this new record they're not pretending to be Magazine or Guns N' Roses. They're not even pretending to be themselves.

This is a much more raw Manic Street Preachers, fuelled by despair as usual but also simplicity. The songs are rock throughout, with big, crunchy riffs by James Dean Bradfield and small-doubt-filled lyrics by Nicky Wire. There are also vocals by Nicky Wire, most notably on the Robocop-funk title track and the brilliant closing track *One Man Militia*, where, over drums reminiscent of the Sex Pistols' *No Fun*, Wire lists his personal reasons to be uncheerful: '*I don't know what I am for but I know what I'm against*' and '*I can't breathe when I hate this much*'.

There are proper drivetime punk anthems, naturally, like recent single *Decline And Fall*, which shares its sense of the epic with The Mighty Wah!, and there are songs with classically Manics titles, like *Brush Strokes Of Reunion* – which sadly doesn't feature Karl Howman as a painter and decorator. *People Ruin Paintings* is stadium jazz, while *Being Baptised* is a pop song, almost. Throughout, passion and doubt run side by side, most notably on the oddly plaintive *Dear Stephen*, a song that basically asks Morrissey to stop being a twat.

People who like to compare things to other things will note that this album shares some of its rawness with *Postcards From A Young Man*, and its affection for rock with *Gold Against The Soul*, but really it doesn't sound like any Manics album. It lacks the smoothness of their recent retro-Euro albums, and tempers the fury with a vein of melancholy.

The three founding members of the Manic Street Preachers are in their mid-50s now, a time when for most artists being your own archive beckons. At this stage – 30-odd years and 15 albums – the Manic Street Preachers should be playing heritage rock shows and releasing albums to fill up the time between greatest-hits tours. *Critical Thinking* shows that with the Manics, rage never sleeps.

David Quantick

Franz Ferdinand

The Human Fear *DOMINO*

Strutting 00s mainstays evolve into glam, retro electronics and traditional grooves.

Transcending their 2000s origins thanks to a solid dedication to the 'art' part of art-pop, Glasgow's strutting sophisticates Franz Ferdinand arrive at album six – seven years after the tone-shifting title track to 2018's *Always Ascending* melted indie rock's mind – in inquisitive style. That the record examines our reactions to human fears such as death and loneliness only seems to bolster its fearlessness.

Opener *Audacious* skips cheerfully between itchy new wave and anthemic Bowie glam, the bombastic pop *Tell Me I Should Go* resembles a steam-powered Beach Boys, *Cats* celebrates FF's roots with a proud Celtic groove, underpinning a Paul Simon-esque tune that could be called *50 Ways To Deep-Fry Your Lover*. There's even a snaking Balkan stomp to *Black Eyelashes*. But it's the album's embrace of retro-futurist video arcade electronica on *The Doctor* and *Hooked*, verging at times on a lascivious indie Prodigy, that keeps Franz Ferdinand surprising 20 years in.

Mark Beaumont

White Denim

12 *BELLA UNION*

Prolific, shape-shifting U.S. combo nail the groove.

White Denim have been many things throughout their career: garage-rock miscreants, prog-jazzers, southern jam types, avant-pop freaks. But main man James Petralli's move from Texas to California has now led to a full flowering of the psychedelic soul and arty R&B previously hinted at on 2018's *Performance*.

Essentially a one-man crusade that happens to feature a wealth of guests (either remotely or in Petralli's LA studio), *12* sounds like a dazzling discourse in groove, richly layered with woodwinds, horns, synths and strings. *Light On* is a latter-day cousin of 2011's snaking *River To Consider*, but with added shimmy. There are dubby echoes of Tom Tom Club in *Look Good*, with vocal cameos by Tameca Jones and Jessie Payo, and Chicago duo Finom make telling contributions to the feelgood funk-soul of *Swinging Door*. All are highlights of an album that exudes warmth pretty much at every turn.

Rob Hughes

Dirtbag Republic

Bad Decisions *DIRTBAG*

Canadian ne'er do wells take it sleazy.

Deep in thrall to hotbox honky-tonks and AC/DC covers where a snooker cue may or may not have been broken over someone's daughter's head, Dirtbag Republic's charm has always been in how gleefully they dig into rock'n'roll's bargain bins to unearth the long-neglected sounds of yesteryear. Praise be, then, that this fourth album is more of the same, an (un) healthy dollop of glunk that plays fast and loose with blues, southern rock and early glam to create something sweaty, greasy and, above all, fun.

Although based in Vancouver, there's some good-ol'-boy charm of the South in *Here I Am*, while *Hard In The City* trades it all for 70s New York. Like a road-trip in an amped-up DeLorean, *Bad Decisions* is less a collection of songs, more a route map through the finest back alleys and dives in rock'n'roll, with Dirtbag Republic promising a good time the whole way.

Rich Hobson

FaithNYC

Love Is A Wish Away *GOOD DEEDS*

Big Apple post-punk magic.

Growing up in 60s Detroit, Felice Rosser experienced Funkadelic, Motown, MC5, the Stooges and 1967's riots before college sent her to New York in time for CBGB's life-changing punk explosion. Taking up bass and songwriting, Rosser played in Brooklyn all-female reggae band Sistren before forming FaithNYC in 1988, hooking up with Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid's Black Rock Coalition. Charged with 80s NY post-punk's electrified

ALEX LAKE PRESS

gumbo, Rosser's previous two albums highlighted her rich, soulful vocals caressing cool bass-propelled funk, rock and reggae with shades of Joan Armatrading's understated grace.

Sophisticated new elements bathe her third, recorded with Justin Adams (Jah Wobble, Robert Plant), whose feel for Afrobeat imbues grooves (*I Stood Up*) and his liquid guitar. Eloquently addressing loss (*Can I Make It Up To You*), losing jobs (*Useless*) or relationships (*Love In A Silent Way*), New York has a much-needed new classic album twinkling in its immortal songbook.

Kris Needs

Pure Prairie League

Back On Track

PURE PRAIRIE LEAGUE

Keeping it pure.

While the Eagles had the entire staff of the Hotel California to market their wares, fellow country rockers Pure Prairie League, who also released their debut album in '72, stayed close to their Ohio roots, becoming local heroes instead.

For two albums they sparkled with twanging guitars and tight harmonies, but line-up changes and life in the not-so-fast-but-grinding middle American lane took their toll. The tally of members is now nudging 30, but a constant sprinkling of veterans has maintained the band's signature sound.

Now down to one founder, pedal steel player John David Call, they've recorded their first album in nearly 20 years, ostensibly to show off their three latest band members, who certainly add zest on tracks like the opening *The Beginning*, *I'm The Lucky One* and *Picture Perfect Life*. But producer – and veteran bassist who only retired a couple of years ago – Mike Reilly keeps it within the band's parameters.

Hugh Fielder

Bombus

Your Blood *BLACK LODGE*

Super-heavy Swedes want to spill your blood.

It's been a while since Bombus released their last studio album, 2019's *Vulture Culture*, and in the meantime a few things have changed: a new record deal with Black Lodge; the departure of co-founding guitarist/vocalist Matte Säker; bringing in two more guitarists, giving the band a triple-axe attack in a five-man line-up.

On top of that, new album *Your Blood* finds the band expanding their horizons with a welcome injection of melody to complement their usual ear-worrying heaviness. Coming on a bit like a metalised Motörhead – the double lead vocals have a nice and gritty Lemmy-esque edge – the tunefully thunderous *Carmina* and gear-changing *The One* are among the more inventive highlights, while *Take You Down* heads in a sort of Fields Of The Nephilim spaghetti-western goth-metal direction.

With more guitars in their armoury and a new-found melodicism, surely nothing can hold back Bombus now?

Essi Berelian

Lambrini Girls

Who Let The Dogs Out

CITY SLANG

Amyl And The Sniffers have really started something. And thank fuck for that.

"You know how Fleetwood Mac almost dedicated *Rumours* to their cocaine dealer? I think we should dedicate this album to all the booze we bought at Tesco," sneer Brighton's Lambrini Girls. Lambrini Girls being Phoebe Lunny (vocals/guitar) and Lilly Macieira (bass), tanked up on too many nights of mixed cheap alcohol and no sleep.

'Barbed', that's the word I'm looking for. Barbed-wire humour. This is Amyl mixed in with electro-clash attitude: snarling, fast and furious, full of meaty hooks and exasperated observations, like Sleaford Mods if they'd been reared on a diet of UK Riot Grrrl agitators Huggy Bear and Frank Carter. This is so much fun to throw your body around to!

The titles give it away: the growlingly sarcastic *Big Dick Energy*, the deliberate provocation of *Cuntology 101*, the splattering *Filthy Rich Nepo Baby* spitting disgust every which way.

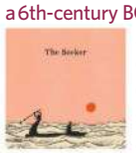
Lambrini Girls are political, but transgressive, smart but not pretentious (no way!), humorous but dark – very dark indeed. Subversive, in all the hidden senses of the word.

Everett True

Rachel Fuller And Pete Townshend

The Seeker *4WORDHOUSE*

Orchestral retelling of the Buddha myth resembles a 6th-century BC *Tommy*.



A bereft young dreamer sets out to find spiritual answers. It's Pete Townshend's theme akin to Woody Allen's obsession with age-gap relationships and Stephen King's umpteen books about writers with no ideas going somewhere haunted. Arguably, the original *Tommy* or Jimmy The Mod was Siddhartha Gautama, or the Buddha, and over a double album and an illustrated book by Townshend's composer wife Rachel Fuller here retells Herman Hesse's 1922 story of the troubled young seeker casting off material possessions and venturing into the world on a journey of self-discovery through poverty, wealth, love, desperation and ultimately wisdom.

The sonic setting, though flavoured with exotic Eastern tones and rhythms, is very much the theatrical orchestral extravaganza. The late Christopher Plummer narrates, South African artist Nakhane plays Siddhartha as if hunting down a Technicolor dreamcoat, and Emeli Sandé is fittingly Broadway as the voice of a river. But the melodies on tracks such as *Awakening*, *Bargain* and the gorgeous *Father And Son* smack of Who hooks, while the appearances of Townshend – in gnarled and show-stopping voice – as The Ferryman and Elton John as a wealthy merchant on *Dice* hint at an operatic *Tommy*. There's even an orchestral take on The Who's questing 70s tune *The Seeker*, which merely makes you want to hear this whole project in rock opera form.

Mark Beaumont

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

We three kings: rock'n'roll with nothing to lose.

We Three Kings

By Royal Appointment

SELF-RELEASED

A few weeks ago I went to see Cirith Ungol, and realised I forgot to turn on the porch light on the way home. I backed into the driveway and accidentally smashed into the porch, obliterating a brake light (and some of the porch). Then I went to bed like the kid in *Hereditary* who accidentally decapitated his sister. When I woke up, Stacey was pissed and told me to "fucking get it together, man". But there is no getting it together in 2024, which I tried to explain to her. It's just a cursed year. We tried our best, and it just didn't work. We just have to ride this shit out. Anyway, I slept in the shed and listened to this record all night. When I woke up and came inside, Stacey said: "I don't want to hear *shit* about Johnny Thunders today." So if you've spent some time in the shed, obviously you're going to love this album. These guys know what's up. It's rock'n'roll with absolutely nothing to lose.

Public Toys

Public Toys *SELF-RELEASED*

The other day I went to see W.A.S.P, and midway through the show Blackie goes on this spiel about how Donald Trump is America's saviour. And I was like: "Did I just pay 130 dollars to watch grandpa ruin Thanksgiving?" It's really on us for coming back to the trough again long after a band has lost the plot, instead of investing time and money into vital shit like these snot-rockers.

Thee Braindrops

Wild Life *SELF-RELEASED*

Back in the late 80s me and my buddy Johnny Hellfire worked as blue-printers, and would spend our smoke breaks hanging outside the shop terrorising locals. There's a real rush to being obnoxious, is what I'm saying. Anyways this is '66 punk but as snotty as anything The Dwarves or The Mummies ever did, and if they were in front of you right now they'd kick you in the dick.

Hot Machine

Leather And Steel

SELF-RELEASED

First, I understand that 'all-girl' is not a genre, and that not every all-girl band sounds like The Runaways. That said, this is an all-girl band that sounds like The Runaways, with a healthy dose of the punky, early Crüe energy. The lyrics would make Kim Fowley jump out a window. These Melbourne-based femme-fatales deliver a total ripper.

The Groanies

The Groanies *SELF-RELEASED*

First of all, the goddamn name is awful. Only the most desperate, blacked-out dead-enders in town would land on The Groanies. Anyway, *The Groanies* rules. It's like if The Misfits and The Cramps teamed up for a night of escalating gang violence in *The Warriors* vein. You can't write a filthy sleaze-em-up like *Dirty Dungeon* without living in one for a while.

PRESS

DeWolff

Muscle Shoals *MASCOT*

Soul power: Dutch rockers tap into the musical ley lines on tenth studio album.

Maybe put it down to the fact that it was recorded at the world-famous FAME and Muscle Shoals Sound Studio (used by Aretha Franklin and the Stones, among other major names) but this album, the follow-up to 2023's *Love, Death & In Between*, comes filled with ghosts from rock'n'soul's illustrious past.

Opener *In Love* sets the tone. A gorgeous blue-eyed soul ballad, it finds Pablo van de Poel channelling his inner Marvin Gaye, his charged emotional state ('*It's turning my world upside down, all my senses inside out*') mirrored by a backdrop of shimmering Hammond organ and Isley Brothers-esque fuzz guitars.

The euphoric mood continues into the Lynyrd Skynyrd-style groove of *Natural Woman*. '*Just a little bit crazy, but that's all part of the thrill!*' van de Poel declares of (presumably) his latest squeeze, his giddiness summed up in the breathless exclamation: '*Alabama lady... where'd you get your sugar from?*'

DeWolff have always worn their influences on their sleeve, and there's the occasional misstep: *Book Of Life* is a Leon Russell piano boogie that fails to fully ignite, while the eight-minute *Snowbird* should have had some judicious editing. Nonetheless, something about recording in the Deep South has made them dig deeper, finding new ways to express their love of the music that touched them as teenagers. And when it works the results are stunning. *Out On The Town* is a gritty wig-out, while *Ophelia* suggests Deep Purple high on hooch, complete with a festival-friendly wordless chorus and some impressive guitar pyrotechnics. Sax-heavy stomp *Truce* raises the temperature further, but it's on *Winner (When It Comes To Losing)* where DeWolff really hit pay dirt, Robin Piso's Doors-like electric piano combining with Pablo's southern fried wah-wah to hypnotic effect. There's a similarly nocturnal feel to Free-like strut *Fools & Horses*, while penultimate track *Ships In The Night* is a moving tale of tour-bus blues ('*A hundred nights away from home, a thousand miles ahead*') that morphs from soulful O'Jays-style groove into a Black Crowes-esque rock'n'roll jam.

Some may scoff at such slavish devotion, but there's a sincerity here that marks DeWolff out as true believers. Closing track *Cicada Serenade* is, as the title suggests, simply a recording of the hum of insects – an elemental final nod to this musical shrine.

Paul Moody

Tremonti

The End Will Show Us How *NAPALM*

Sixth album from Creed/Alter Bridge guitarist's side-project.

These are good times for Mark Tremonti. The Creed reunion has turned out to be wildly successful, and at the time of writing the members haven't fallen out again. His almost self-titled solo band won't be eclipsing the mothership, but he's cooking up a head of steam.

Like its five predecessors, *The End Will Show Us How* is all about the riffs, and each of the dozen tracks is based on a gigantic one, whether it's *Now That I've Made It*'s Sabbath-like underpinning, or the more thrash-based heroics of *Nails*. Over this, Tremonti adds classic metal vocals, a big chorus or two, and some thunderous drumming from Ryan Bennett high in the mix. It's not wholly one-paced, and when *All The Wicked Things* opens with near stadium-house keyboards before going all Alter Bridge, Tremonti may have found a way to expand his palette.

John Aizlewood

Cortez

Thieves And Charlatans *RIPPLE MUSIC*

Way beyond your standard stoner outing.

Boston-based Cortez won't be rushed. They're now on album number four since debuting in 2007, and the results are always a bit beyond expectations.

And so it is with *Thieves And Charlatans*. With elements of doom and stoner firmly woven into their sound, they nevertheless transcend the obvious to create an identity unique to themselves. The punchy *Stove Up, No Heroes* and blazing opener *Gimme Danger (On My Stereo)* are relatively concise in the grand scheme of the album. Elsewhere the tracks build, develop and surge to their climaxes with the labyrinthine, twisting *Liminal Spaces* and the suspenseful *Levels,* which incrementally snowballs from gloomily sinister to full-on riff tsunami, the two standouts when it comes to intelligent and progressive songwriting.

Ultimately, the album achieves the tough goal of delivering great power allied to satisfying complexity and melody, revealing fresh details with each listen. Way to go.

Essi Berelian

Black Ends

Psychotic Spew *YOUTH RIOT*

Seattle goes gunk.

Touting their 'gunk-pop' grunge-punk hybrid, and hailed by US press as Seattle's new flagship band, idiosyncratic trio Black Ends trumpet their allegiance to Nirvana, recording their startling debut album at *Bleach* engineer Jack Endino's studio, with guest cellist Lori Goldston (of Nirvana's *Unplugged* renown) and Cobain's Twin Reverb combo perched on singer-guitarist Nicolle Swims' amp.

Thankfully, apart from some hoary riffs, the band that's spent six years building a rabid following in Seattle ignite a riot of their own as Swims' damaged lyrics surf the apocalyptic churn cooked up with bassist Ben Swanson and drummer Billie Jessica Paine on *Bent*, *Pour Me* and *My Own Dead*, the dissonant squall of *Black's Lullaby* recalling 80s NY 'no wave' provocateurs Teenage Jesus And The Jerks. Easing the bombast, *Bye-Bye!* and *When I'm Alone* suggest life beyond gunk, maybe realising Swims' declaration: "I want to be a punk rock Nina Simone."

Kris Needs

Paradise Sins

Desires *PARADISE SINS*

Latest EP from would-be UK arena rockers with sights set firmly on 1987.

You have to admire anyone in 2024 who can sing the lyric '*I like the clothes you wear, they'll look good on my floor*' and keep a straight face. That might not be an exact quote, but you get the idea – would-be rock star thinking straight from the Vince Neil handbook for life.

You also have to admire Paradise Sins' ambition, not least singer Luis Riley Morrison's run up at some of the high notes that would have levelled a young Bon Jovi. There are plenty of other Bon Jovi musical

SATELLITE JUNKPRESS

references here, too, along with Little Angels, and Paul Stanley when Kiss were still up for the fight. Paradise Sins are better when they're rocking too (power ballad *Slipping Away* does just that), and the strutting *Sacrifice* and the rattling *Beautiful Disaster* will bring you back for more.

Philip Wilding

DoFlame

Bent *BLUE GRAPE*

Hardcore and hip-hop butt heads.

Spare a thought for the modern hardcore band. In a genre that barely shifted style or tone since its inception, the sudden success of Turnstile and Knocked Loose has left a scramble where lunk-headed breakdowns and gang chants are no longer sufficient. That does leave some room for innovation, though, and it's a space that DoFlame clearly want to explore.

Bent begins in the more familiar realms of bouncy 90s alt.rock-flavoured punk, but by the time *Too Loose* comes around they're starting to experiment with dance beats. From there it's a tug-o'-war between spiky punk ragers (*The Ick, Rats*) and the hip-hop/dance-inspired realms of avowed Beastie Boys-worshippers Joey Valence & Brae. Sorta-original, sorta-derivative, DoFlame's strength is in repurposing the familiar in a novel way, whether brazenly nicking Nirvana's *Very Ape* riff back from The Prodigy (*Hit Where It Hurts*) or using 2009's *Heads Will Roll* as a launch pad for a lurching bass line (*Fastlanes*).

Rich Hobson

Steve Koch

Blues *CREATE*

Keeping it fresh.

Wisconsin guitarist Steve Koch has a penchant for the same blues that inspired the Great British guitarist elite of the 60s, and more recently Joe Bonamassa: Muddy Waters, Freddie King and the rest. But this album is no mere homage to either the originals or the disciples.

Koch has clearly studied this sub-section of the blues carefully, and he approaches it with his own sound and style. His tone is thinner than most, but it's clear and piercing once it's cranked up. His style relies on a spontaneity born of self-confidence. His playing on *The Stumble* has even more zest than Peter Green's version with John Mayall. And it's doubtful whether Clapton could still summon up the sting that Koch gets on *Stepping Out*.

He also shows that he can see beyond the Chicago skyline, with covers of Delbert McClinton's *Standing On Shakey Ground* and Tower Of Power's *Don't Change Horses*.

Hugh Fielder

Cosmic Room 99

Cosmic Room 99

SISTER 9 RECORDINGS

Feedback is their friend.

Almost 40 years after its original release, The Jesus And Mary Chain's melodically squalling debut album *Psychocandy* still casts a long and influential shadow over subsequent generations of psychedelic rock'n'rollers living their lives in black.

Cosmic Room 99 are a case in point. Their output dripping with feedback and pummeling, fuzzed-up riffs and shrouded by voluminous washes of reverb, this trio of leather-clad trippers from Italy do well to stamp their own personality on the 11 breathless tracks that make up their self-titled debut album.

The propulsive *Plastic Venus* captures beautifully their bittersweet aesthetic as an infectious melodicism and a relentless rhythm are scythed mercilessly by slices of guitar noise that continue slashing throughout. Such is the booming echo of *Days Of Violence* that it feels like a dispatch from the underworld, while sparks fly during the buzz-saw attack of *Red Lights* that revels in a palpable mood of sonic violence.

A promising debut.

Julian Marszalek

Julian Cope

Friar Tuck *HEAD HERITAGE*

Sarcasm and actual tunes as one of rock's one-offs resurfaces.

Julian Cope has arguably had one of the strangest, most varied careers in rock'n'roll (and academia, as an expert in ancient history), and while his experimental output in recent years has been challenging at best, *Friar Tuck* finds the pendulum swinging back to not only listenable but really a lot of fun.

In the song titles alone there's a gleeful sense of mischief, sarcastic wordplay and silly but vivid imagery: *Too Freud To Rock'n'Roll, Too Jung To Die; You Gotta Keep Your Halfwits About You; Four Jehovahs In A Volvo Estate* (think Kraftwerk taking to the M6 rather than the autobahn), for starters. That he's rediscovered the art of melody, albeit with a loveably brash home-studio wonkiness to keep the quirk factor up, just adds to the appeal.

Friar Tuck is a humorous and bewildered look at the modern world from a man who has never quite seemed a part of it.

Emma Johnston

Tak Matsumoto Group

TMG II *FRONTIERS*

Bigger in Japan.

Back in 2003, Japanese superstar guitarist Tak Matsumoto from B'Z teamed up in California with Mr. Big singer Eric Martin and Night Ranger bassist Jack Blades and recorded an album, *TMG*. They played a barnstorming tour of Japan, and... that was it.

Twenty years later Matsumoto has revived the project (having in the meantime spread his wings melodically with an orchestra and jamming with guitar great Larry Carlton), adding Guns N'Roses/Velvet Revolver drummer Matt Sorum.

TMG II is a harder rocking affair, with a sprinkling of homegrown roots, best evidenced on smart opener *Crash Down Love*, the closing *Guitar Hero* and teaming up with Japanese band Babymetal on *Eternal Flames*, but whether it's enough to break the band outside Japan is debateable.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

The Big Deal: difficult not to enjoy.

DRAGAN JEREMINOV/PRESS

The Big Deal

Electrified *FRONTIERS*

The Big Deal are melodic rock's very own Marmite band. Their 2022 debut album *First Bite* prompted many (false) opinions about them, including that the Croatian band had been fabricated by their label or were simply studio puppets. In fact The Big Deal were simply pushing the envelope.

First Bite was preceded by three covers – Europe's *Rock The Night, Amaranth* by Nightwish and, most tellingly, the ABBA classic *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)* that offered a perfect synopsis of The Big Deal's raison d'être. Three years later the band, minus bassist Alessandro Del Vecchio, are back to provide more joy and fury.

With songs supplied mostly by guitarist and producer Srdjan Brankovic – exceptions are *Survivor*, from the pen of Treat's Anders Wikström, and the Jona Tee (H.e.a.t) and Del Vecchio-sourced *Don't Talk About Love – Electrified* is like The Big Deal, only better. It's big, bolshy, adventurous, wholesome, sparkly and cheesy. Mostly importantly, it's difficult not to enjoy.

Fatal Vision

Three Times Lucky

ART OF MELODYZ

Born during melodic rock's commercial peak, Canada's Fatal Vision have recorded two albums since ending a three-decade hiatus in 2021. Featuring numerous guests including Paul Laine, Jeff Scott Soto and Whitesnake's Joel Hoekstra, *Three Times Lucky* is a carefree, heartwarming throwback to the golden days of 80s rock.

Fighter V

Heart Of The Young

ROCK ATTACK!/CARGO

During the five years since their debut *Fighter*, these Swiss hard rockers have undergone radical personnel changes, including bringing in a new singer, Emmo Acar, who has a gruff delivery that complements the everything-and-the-kitchen sink turbo-smoothness of the music. Trying circumstances considered, this album is rather good.

Voodoo Circle

Hail To The King *AFM*

Voodoo Circle proudly worship at the altar of the Deep Purple family, and English singer David Readman is a flagrant disciple of David Coverdale. The German band's seventh album also nods at Rainbow, with a pair of songs written by former keyboard player Tony Carey, and tosses a *Kashmir*-flavoured riff into *Castles Made Of Glass*. *Hail To The King* is lots of fun, but too derivative.

Landfall

Wide Open Sky *FRONTIERS*

Fronted by Gui Oliver, who's among the most impressive (relatively) new names around, Landfall leap the 'difficult third album' hurdle with ease. *When The Curtain Falls, Running In Circles* and *Tree Of Life* overflow with emotion and energy, the expressive vocals of Oliver deserving particular praise. The album has a modern feel that suggests the Brazilians' journey is only just beginning.

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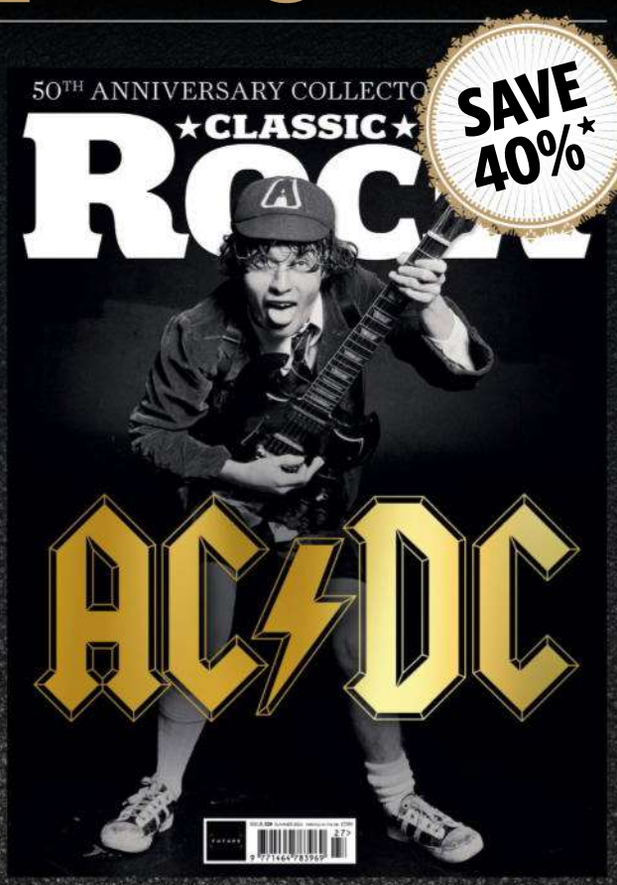

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

Twisted Sister

Stay Hungry – 40th Anniversary Edition

ATLANTIC/RHINO

The very difficult third album.

After 10 years paying dues in New York/New Jersey, Twisted Sister became an 'overnight sensation' upon trying their luck in England, where a larger-than-life stage act – based almost entirely on their motormouth frontman Dee Snider – won many friends including Lemmy, and Pete Way of UFO who, in title at least, co-produced their 1982 independent debut album *Under The Blade*. The groundswell of support, and an unforgettable set on Channel 4's *The Tube*, secured them a deal with Atlantic Records and led to the album *You Can't Stop Rock 'N' Roll*, released in 1983.

The following year they took a shot at the big time with *Stay Hungry*, produced by Tom Werman (fresh from Mötley Crüe's *Shout At The Devil*). It went platinum and remains the band's biggest seller, but making it wasn't a happy process. So unhappy, in fact, that in 2004 they re-recorded the whole thing, as *Still Hungry*. Happily, this remaster of the original has added extra heft – pushing the guitars of Jay Jay French and Eddie Ojeda further forward to plant it, sonically, close to Judas Priest's *British Steel*.

Twisted Sister existed to deliver noisy, punch-the-air, singalong rock anthems, and *Stay Hungry* contained two of their best (and biggest hits) in *We're Not Gonna Take It* and *I Wanna Rock*. The former sounds like *Billion Dollar Babies*-era Alice Cooper, the latter something aggressively heavier. Meanwhile, third single *The Price* is a heartfelt power ballad soaring on the uncanny strength of Snider's voice.

Other tracks haven't aged as well, though. *Stay Hungry*'s fast-paced title track still sounds oddly punkish. There are welcome echoes of Alice Cooper (again) on *Burn In Hell*, and the *Captain Howdy* section of the two-song *Horror-Teria* 'suite' (the root of Snider's ill-fated *Strangeland* horror movie), but album closer *SMF* now seems sluggish. Elsewhere, *Street Justice, Don't Let Me Down* and *The Beast* – as well as the bonus tracks, newly updated out-takes *Blastin' Fast & Loud* and *Never Say Never* – offer even slimmer pickings.

Still, French and bassist Mark Mendoza both worked on this reissue and are content (not least with having all five band members featured on the new cover artwork). The band, though, are better represented on CD2 – a live set from San Bernadino in October 1984 proving that even *Stay Hungry*'s lesser songs worked on stage. This disc is far truer to the band's strengths. It's only 40 minutes long, but it's enough to inspire fond memories among all who witnessed Twisted Sister in their brief heyday.

Neil Jeffries

T.Rex

Tanx

DEMON

The bopping elf boogies on.

When T.Rex's marvellous 1972 album *The Slider* and subsequent, equally immortal singles *Children Of The Revolution* and *Solid Gold Easy Action* all stalled at 'only' No.2 in the UK chart, some naysayers wondered if the reign of Marc Bolan and T.Rex was coming to a close.

Whatever Bolan himself reckoned, 1973's *Tanx*, now reissued alongside the absolutely essential *Bolan Boogie* compilation as very desirable picture discs, although not quite as commercially successful as what went before, has a lot going for it with plenty of the winning formula still in evidence. *Mad Donna* and *Shock Rock* (*'If you know how to rock, you don't have to shock'*) are built around the repurposed Chess riffs Bolan could probably have fashioned with his Les Paul during a nap. *Born To Boogie* is a title ChatGPT would probably throw up if you typed 'T.Rex' into it, but that doesn't make it any less groovy.

Okay, lyrically he continued to knock out the usually loveable gobbledegook he probably cobbled together in the back of the limo, but musically he was stretching out, at least a bit. He got in some saxophone, Mellotron and a more prominent piano, and *Electric Slim And The Factory Hen* and *Left Hand Luke & The Beggar Boys* – more titles you could brush your teeth with – show a definite leaning towards soul and gospel.

The glorious *Teenage Dream* ('74) and stupendous *New York City* ('75) aside, it was downhill from here, but *Tanx* is right up there alongside *Electric Warrior* and *The Slider*.

Pat Carty

War

The Collection 1977-1994

RHINO

Five-LP, five-CD collection of seminal R&B band's work, on multi-coloured vinyl.

Having multiple line-ups, including, improbably, Eric Burdon of The Animals as a founder member, War, despite their moniker, were a joyous fusion of multiple styles ranging from jazz to funk, Latino to soul. Their biggest album was 1973's *The World Is A Ghetto*, their best-known single 1975's *Low Rider*, so by 1977 they had passed their commercial peak. But they still had gallons of creative juice in the tank.

Perhaps their nearest musical relations were Sly & The Family Stone – the way the deep, worming bass, serrated funk guitars and salsa rhythms come together one by one on *War Is Coming! War Is Coming!* (from 1977's *Platinum Funk*) reminds of *Dance To The Music*, while the collective, almost inebriated ecstasy of *River Niger* feels akin to *There's A Riot Goin' On*. The title track of *Galaxy*, however, reaches out to the cosmos of Herbie Hancock and Sun Ra.

The Music Band ('79) contrasts with the sacred, gospel-like tones of *I'm The One Who Understands* and the bawdy, fast-cut exchanges of *Good, Good Feeling*.

By 1982's *Outlaw* there is a sense that they have had to taper their elaborate grooves to get with the more mininal, 4/4 tendency of the new decade – they failed to land any major hits. By 1994, however, and *Peace Sign*, you feel that here is a band of veterans who can still show the new-jack generation how to cut a rug or two.

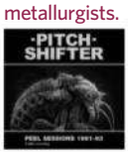
David Stubbs

Pitchshifter

Peel Sessions 91-93

COLD SPRING

Coruscating early sessions by Nottingham's finest metallurgists.



In time, Pitchshifter, co-founded by guitarist and programmer Johnny Carter and bassist Mark Clayden, would take on board beats elements as metal and dance music historically converged on the common ground of industrial noise. However, in these early sessions, recorded for their champion John Peel, they were still threshing across new terrain as avant-garde metal beasts, akin to the likes of Godflesh.

Gritter sets out their intentions, with its stentorian vocals and piledriving, pulverising guitars. This is beyond noodling, beyond shredding, beyond all the twaddle of old-school heavy metal; this is unremitting, repetitive. *Tendrill* is in a similar bulging vein, violently, methodically, solemnly grinding

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY

out fresh trails. *Dry Riser Inlet* is skullcrushing, punitive, irresistibly concussive.

(A Higher Form Of) Killing sees them take a further evolutionary step, reminiscent of Cabaret Voltaire in its use of found tapes, before it rises into being, sleeker, more silvery. *Diable (Wayco Survival Mix)* putters percussively, taking to the air Can-like briefly, before returning to Earth, rolling, tank-like bass, over difficult terrain. *Deconstruction (Reconstruction)* is the heaviest assault of these sessions, from a group who helped assure that from now on metal would no longer be a daft or dirty word.

David Stubbs

Bush

Sixteen Stone CRAFT RECORDINGS

Mega-selling debut from grunge's British wing gets a 30th-anniversary vinyl reissue.

The critical scorn that greeted Bush when they emerged with their debut album *Sixteen Stone* in 1994 was in inverse proportion to their actual success. This motley bunch of Limey refugees from Transvision Vamp and Midnight (who they?) steamrolled over grunge's gatekeepers to the tune of six million sales in the US.

That opprobrium seems ridiculous today. Bush may not have bought anything new to the party, but nor were they grunge chancers or Nirvana copyists. This 30th-anniversary vinyl reissue – retooled as a double vinyl in a range of cooly lurid colours, with a modified front cover (silver instead of orange) – showcases a band who balanced melodic nous with some properly gnarly noise. The big hits (*Everything Zen, Machinehead*, sawing slowburner *Glycerine*) still sound great, but it's the lesser-remembered tracks that stand out, not least the challenging, atonal *Swim* (boldly dropped two tracks in) and tremendous closing track *Alien*. A pre-celeb Gavin Rossdale strikes the perfect balance between huskiness and howling angst, while veteran Madness/Dexys producers Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley bring just the right amount of gloss to the sound.

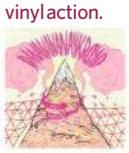
Sonically and physically, this reissue sounds and looks lovely, although spreading a 52-minute album across two vinyl discs - with the elevated price tag that comes with it – will separate diehard Bush fans from 'I ♥ The 90s' nostalgists. Either way, it shows that *Sixteen Stone* deserves more than its reputation would have it.

Dave Everley

Dananananaykroyd

Hey Everyone! ALCOPOP!

Glaswegian six-piece genre-busters finally get some vinyl action.



Released at the tail end of the noughties, Dananananaykroyd's debut album was a gleeful oddity even then, and the passage of time hasn't dimmed its off-kilter uniqueness. Encumbered with a band name so dramatically stupid it's almost genius, the Glaswegians created their own little world where a manic energy rooted in an audible love of the early US post-hardcore scene rubs up against a very distinctly Scottish melodic chime and charm.

There are shades of Pavement's wry indie on *Some Dresses* and *The Great Symbol & The Hash*, the latter veering from happy handclaps to a howl of feedback and percussive chaos, to throat-shredding screams and a beefy breakdown, myriad moods flitting by in just one song. There's a deep sense of them taking a great amount of joy from their own weirdness, a seat-of-the-pants feeling that it could all collapse around them at any moment, and an inkling they'd be fine with that. Punk riffs crash against a pop optimism, ideas trip over each other in the rush to get out, and the mayhem is enough to leave you breathless. Now released on vinyl for the first time, it's worth its weight in wax.

Emma Johnston

Slaughter & The Dogs

Bite Back Live! SECRET

Dogs off the leash.

Rescheduled three times because of the pandemic, this live focus on Slaughter & The Dogs' second album (on CD and DVD), from a sold-out gig at Club Rebellion in Manchester in October 2021, feels all the more intense because of the tortuous journey to the big night. Originally released in spring 1980 and marketed under the name Slaughter, *Bite Back* was a rapidly assembled collection of tunes written mostly by guitarist Mick Rossi, bassist Howard Bates, and vocalist Ed Garrity (ex-Nosebleeds) who stepped in following the sudden departure of Wayne Barrett.

For such a hastily created bunch of tunes, *Bite Back* has stood the test of time, and most of it is here, the set kicking off, like the studio album, with *Now I Know, What's Wrong Boy?* and *Won't Let Go*. It's a strong start, and the energy levels remain high throughout. *Hell In New York, She Ain't Gonna Show* and *Chasing Me* sound terrific, *Who Are The Mystery Girls, Boston Babies* and *Dame To Blame* hark back to debut *Do It Dog Style*, and for a real blast from '77 *Cranked Up Really High* gets the audience singing at the top of their lungs.

There's plenty of life in these old Dogs yet.

Essi Berelian

Sparks

Sparks: 1974 EDSEL

50th-anniversary edition of two subversive glam-pop classics, now with extras.

All but ignored at home in the US after two low-selling albums, Ron and Russell Mael relocated from California to London in 1973, buoyed by the promise of a deal with Island Records, who were smart enough to see their potential. Being devout Anglophiles helped too; the brothers loved The Kinks, The Who, 60s Floyd and The Move, and tapped up Roy Wood to produce their first album for their new label, *Kimono My House*.

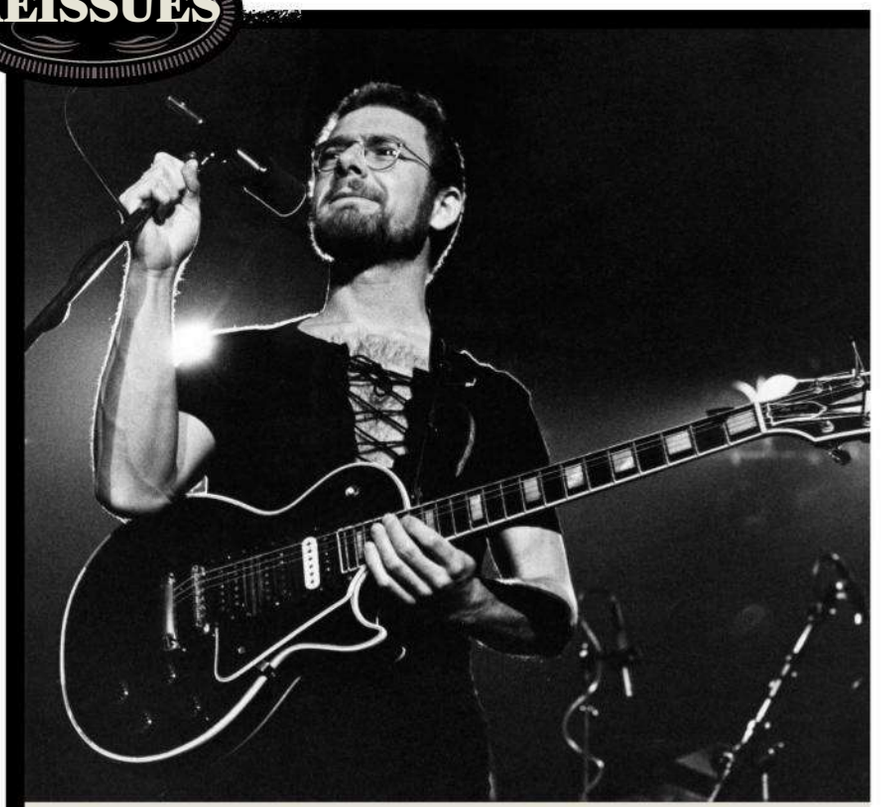
Wood never happened, but Island's in-house producer Muff Winwood proved a worthy replacement. The brothers were allowed free rein the studio, backed by a new, all-English iteration of Sparks: bassist Martin Gordon, guitarist Adrian Fisher and drummer Norman 'Dinky' Diamond. The dizzying *Kimono My House* – a pun on Rosemary Clooney's early-50s ditty *Come On-A My House* – remains a magnificent showcase for the Maels' theatrical art-pop songs about weird science, tragi-comic suicide pacts and love gone askew, packed with lyrical wit and seditious humour. Plus they had the look; Sparks' *Top Of The Pops* debut, performing *This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us*, is still vivid in the memory of people of a certain age: Ron at his keyboard, with sinister stare and Hitler moustache, while pretty boy Russell tears it up and yelps falsetto.

The song went Top 10, as did the equally fabulous *Amateur Hour*, turning Sparks into commercial gold. Their across-the-board appeal – besieged by screaming teens, adored by 'serious' music fans – resulted in sell-out tours and super-quick follow-up, *Propaganda*. Issued in November '74, the album confirmed the Maels' status as fresh princes of post-glam, experimenting freely with rhythm, melody and meter in a way that managed to be both cerebral and thrilling accessible, from *Something For The Girl With Everything* to *Never Turn Your Back On Mother Earth* and beyond.

This three-disc set comprises both albums from Sparks' annus mirabilis, alongside a bonus CD of demos, B-sides and an exuberant live rendition of *Amateur Hour* from Croydon's Fairfield Halls. The joy of it all is that the Maels, now deep into their 70s, are still fucking with form, still investing their music with wit and wonder, still exploring. In that context, *Kimono My House* (**10/10**) and *Propaganda* (**9/10**) feel like part of a glorious continuum rather than like 50-year-old museum pieces.

Rob Hughes

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY



King Crimson

Red 50th Anniversary Edition *PANEGYRIC*

Spectacular 50th-anniversary edition upgrades behemoth first-phase-curtailing album, along with untold extras.

In the five years after *In the Court Of The Crimson King* announced their prog-storming arrival in 1969, King Crimson went through myriad line-up changes, leaving Robert Fripp the sole original member when he unexpectedly guillotined the band after recording 1974's career-peaking *Red*.

Essentially a power trio after violinist David Cross's departure, Fripp, singer/bassist John Wetton and drummer Bill Bruford were joined by past brass guests Ian McDonald, Mel Collins, Robin Miller and Mark Charig, in retrospect coming full circle making an unholy glorious noise at various times throughout.

Cranking up some magnificently evil riffs, Fripp stopped giving orders and let the musicians fly. Harnessing his dazzling virtuosity to Fripp's eruption-prone mean machine, Bruford's drumming sprouts wings with bone-crunching dynamics, while Wetton's thunderously gouging bass seems plundered from the same infernal cauldron as Magma's fearsome Jannick Top. The live-in-the-US *Providence* mints avant-rock carnage yet they could still steer *Starless* between weeping beauty, cliffhanger tension and time signature-defying jazz blowout with astonishing sensitivity to create one of Crimson's most beloved ditties. Among Crimson's finer vocalists, Wetton also elevates *Fallen Angel* and extraordinary *One More Red Nightmare*.

Before *Red* was released, Fripp's urge for a change and rest from touring suddenly curtailed King Crimson (until 1981, anyway), to all-round shock .

Despite Fripp's initial objection to Crimson's cover photo debut ("Fucking appalling"), the trio again adorn this consummate upgrade and expansion to mark its 50th. Original fans will probably make for the 200g double vinyl consisting of Steven Wilson's 2024 Mix and David Singleton's rawer Elemental Mixes, plus percussion tracks for *Starless*. The handsome two CD/two Blu-ray box contains the aforementioned plus play-once *The Making Of Starless* via its instrumental components and Wilson's Instrumental Mixes on CD. Sadly lost to this writer, two Blu-ray discs straddle the *Red*-related cosmos with three mixes of the live *USA* set, six summer '74 US tour concerts, *Three More Red Nightmares*, and everything in Dolby Atmos.

As Mike Barnes says in *A New Day Yesterday*: "King Crimson were clearly on the edge of something very significant in the development of rock music." Here's the full gleaming lab report to confirm it.

Kris Needs

Rival Sons

Great Western Valkyrie *EARACHE*

Californians' magnum opus contender is still electric 10 years later.

A review in this magazine awarded *Great Western Valkyrie* a profoundly rare score of 10/10 when it was first released in 2014, and the rationale still holds up.

Like no other genre, rock is uniquely tied to legacy and what came before, which is sometimes – fairly or unfairly – why modern bands fall short of the perfect appraisal. But the moment *Electric Man* kicks in, with Scott Holiday's fuzz-soaked guitars and Jay Buchanan's mesmeric voice (half yodelling, half singing) surging through the speakers, it was clear that Rival Sons had evolved into serious players; now they had unshakeable aura as well as songs. *Secret*'s guttural rhythm and blues remain a prominent set-list fixture. *Play The Fool* struts forward with cock-of-the-walk swagger. *Belle Starr* and *Where I've Been* – one of several great Sons ballads – deliver the enthralling cinematic soundscapes alluded to in the album's title.

For its first time on vinyl, the anniversary goodies come in the form of cracking bonus tracks *Too Much Love* and *My Nature*.

That *Great Western Valkyrie* could be the apex in a catalogue that seldom dips below superb is testament to the towering benchmark that Rival Sons have set for contemporary rock. Still electric – yes, it is.

Chris Lord

Dolium

The Products Of Our Own Demands and Commands *SISTER 9*

Sheffield post-punk gold.

Named after large earthenware vessels dating back to Roman times, Dolium formed in late-90s Sheffield as punk scene rejuvenators brandishing high-octane Stooges riffs and darkly gothic lyrical obsessions. Early fan John Peel hailed 2004 single *Driving With the Deathettes* "a screaming, raging, frighteningly fierce assault of punk rock".

So begins this four-CD box set celebrating label Sister 9's 20th anniversary containing Dolium's two albums, unreleased third, singles and B-sides. For those unfamiliar with Dolium, it's something of a revelation as singer-guitarist Rhys Bloodjoy, singer-bassist Mistress De Vine and drummer Simon F. Handsworth steam in with the single and nine similar that comprise 2005's *Kisses Fractures*. B-sides *Daddy's Swinging In The Attic* and *Dead Teenagers* trailer the hot-wired churning goth uncaged on 2008's *Hellhounds On The Prowl*, De Vine's ghostly counter vocals shadowing Adamo's guttural rasp over grinding evil riffage on *Coughin' In The Coffin* and *Dogbowl*.

Ceasing operations in 2010 left super-intense third album *Brother Transistor* unreleased, invoking the Cramps or B-52's at Motörhead speed on *Get Off On My Machine* and scabrous *VD On the Radio*. Rounding off with demos and out-takes, this 74-track set's gloriously debauched roller-coaster is not for the fainthearted but it is massive fun.

Kris Needs

Tygers Of Pan Tang

Animal Instinct *MIGHTY MUSIC*

One of NWOBHM's most likely to succeed vital-sounding mid-2000s album.

With more former members than Whitesnake and more comebacks than Mötley Crüe, Tygers Of Pan Tang have often found themselves just at the periphery of mainstream success. Around the time of 1982's *The Cage* (after golden-boy guitarist John Sykes had jumped ship for Ozzy's band but landed in Thin Lizzy), and with two actual hit singles under their leopard-print belt, it looked like a rosy future of Hammersmith Odeon shows and baying American audiences who couldn't understand the band's accents beckoned.

By 2008, four years after their last album (with yet another singer), founder and guitarist Robb Weir and new vocalist Jack Meille – who sounds and swaggers like a young Sean Harris – made *Animal Instinct*, a record that would have made them international headliners had it been released 20 years earlier.

With a vibrant remix and

RONGOTI/PRESS

suitably violent-looking new artwork, the reissue is a sterling reminder of how the band once again tapped into something that had made them a major-label proposition all those years ago. Tracks like the thundering *Rock Candy*, the snappy *Cry Sweet Freedom*, the thrumming *Devils Find A Fool* and the vibrant *Live For The Day* (a song that Diamond Head should probably have recorded) have a commercial bent but are as hard as flint. All that said, it would be another four years before they roused themselves to make another record.

Philip Wilding

Echo And The Bunnymen

What Are You Going To Do With Your Life?

LONDON

25th-anniversary release for slow-motion misfire.

An album that divides opinion, especially if you're Echo And The Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch and Will Sergeant. After the band had decided they weren't Electrafixion after all, their 1997 'comeback' *Evergreen* performed solidly. Two years later, this – a Mac solio in all but name – saw the singer enacting midlife crooner fantasies, and a stream of slow, string-drenched ballads reached for Leonard Cohen but arrived at a grainier Vince Hill. The songs simply don't possess the Bacharach melodic magic they require, and Sergeant's guitar was sidelined, as were any thoughts of 'rock'. Sergeant hated it; Mac undoubtedly thinks it's majestic. Tracks like *Rust* and *Baby Rain* just exist, never insisting on one's attention.

This reissue (34-track, two-CD or coloured vinyl) livens up matters massively with different mixes, takes and, crucially, live cuts. It's rarely a chore to hear the Bunnymen rip through *Back Of Love, Do It Clean, Over The Wall* et al, and they sound fully engaged at Liverpool's Cream in 1997. This set catches fire with these. The 1999 recordings, however, focus on the contemporaneous release, so lacklustre it makes one comprehend why Coldplay took a shine to them. Get this for the bits where The Bunnymen remember who they are.

Chris Roberts

The Futureheads

Decent Days & Nights: The Singles *CHERRY RED*

Breakneck singles collection from the noughties' manic street harmonisers.

Even in as excitable an era as the early 2000s, Sunderland's The Futureheads were a hyperactive alt.pop handful. In a characteristically disjointed jumble (and the spirit of the band), *Decent Days & Nights* chucks their singles at you in manic fervour, mingling eras into an adrenaline rush of stentorian North Eastern songcraft. Exuberant, new-wavey early frenzies (*Carnival Kids*, *First Day*, the title track) resemble beat-pop on fast-forward or Wire having a fit, while their punchy cover of Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love* feels like being caught in the song's snapping jaws. Mid-00s tracks like *The Beginning Of The Twist* and *Area* find a richer density building; *Skip To The End* is particularly well constructed, topping tensile beats and melodies with ragged Modern Lovers riffs.

Tracks from 2019's comeback record *Powers* give the collection identity issues (*Jekyll* is virtually prog-metal, while *Good Night Out* could've fallen off an It Bites best-of), but the band are regularly blind to their best tunes – early B-side *Cabaret* trumps most things here. And it's a travesty that their barbershop Richard Thompson cover *Beeswing*, while fine, represents 2012's a-capella album *Rant* over the stupendous *Thursday*. But when they hit their melodic stride on the magnificent, Weezerish *Heartbeat Song*, few of their era could catch them.

Mark Beaumont

John Wetton

Concentus: The John Wetton Live Collection, Volume I *SPIRIT OF UNICORN MUSIC*

Live deep dive showcases bassist/singer's uniqueness and versatility.

Prior to his passing in 2017, John Wetton enjoyed a late-career renaissance, after overcoming the alcoholism he'd battled in the 80s and 90s. In the new millennium Wetton made solo albums that showcased his unique ability to fuse the prog chops he'd displayed in King Crimson and UK with the pop hooklines that characterised his songwriting in Asia.

He also nimbly reprised highlights from all three bands' catalogues on stage, as demonstrated on this 10-disc round-up of seven long-deleted 90s live albums. Although two appeared in 2016's *The Official Bootleg Archive Vol. 1*, a fresh remastering and a wealth of rare stage and sound-check performances (including a compelling semi-unplugged *All Along The Watchtower*) should compensate for the die-hard fans at whom this collection is aimed.

While the audio quality varies, it's uniformly clear and of a good standard. Spirited, A-game performances from Wetton and bandmates (including IQ keyboard player Martin Orford) light up the set-list staples on each album (*Heat Of The Moment, Starless, Battle Lines*), deeper cuts (*Arkangel, I Can't Lie Anymore*) and the absorbing acoustic reworkings that place *Akoustica, Hazy Monet*, and *Akustischa* among this collection's frequent highlights.

Rich Davenport

Band Of Skulls

Cold Fame *DIZZY HEIGHTS*

Quadruple vinyl box set charts the inexorable rise of indie rock wunderkinds.

RÉMY GRANDROQUES/DALLE/ICONICPIX

Just in time for Christmas, this lavish vinyl retrospective (subtitle: *Where We Are Going Is Anyone's Guess? Archive 2009–2014*) recollects the Southampton band's rise to fame from their scratchy blues-rock debut (it was the fertile period when everyone wanted to be The White Stripes, and it shows), their graduation from being a band who sounded like they might encore with *Icky Thump* into something altogether more sophisticated –and very quickly, too. By the time of their second album, 2012's *Sweet Sour* they had developed with musical textures and colours that saw an American audience suddenly prick up its ears like a dog hearing an intruder in the yard.

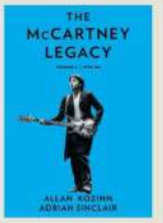
These days the band has become the reserve of original member Russell Marsden (guitar and vocals), which is something of a shame as bassist and sometimes singer Emma Richardson (acclaimed painter, and last seen playing with Pixies) usually brought some of the most interesting songs to the table. Which is not to decry this lavish small-batch collection; it's literally in its hundreds. Alongside the remastered vinyl is Marsden's personal archive of images and memorabilia laid out lovingly in the kind of signed coffee-table hardback book you'll be careful not to drop on your toe, as well as an album of demos, live takes, B-sides and difficult-to-find recordings.

Better still, it serves as a rich reminder of how far and fast Band Of Skulls came in those five years. The leap between albums one and two will give you pause, considering how wanting most bands' second album usually is. (Case in point: *Hometowns*, from *Sweet Sour*, sounds like another duo, Norway's folky Kings Of Convenience, and that's meant as a compliment.) Their collective musical ambition already sounded like it had no parameters, even then they were refusing to stand still.

What happens next is anyone's guess, although it appears to be in the hands of Marsden, who's been playing low-key gigs and promising a new line-up and music. Let's hold out hope for that, but not forget the band who in their earliest incarnation made eyes and ears pop with songs like the crunching *Death By Diamonds And Pearls* and the undulating *You Are All That I Am Not*.

Philip Wilding

The McCartney Legacy Volume 2: 1974-80



Allan Kozinn and Adrian Sinclair *HARPER COLLINS/DEY STREET*

Listen to what the man said.

Excluding Bob Dylan, there have been more books about Paul McCartney than any other rock star. Which is understandable, given that both have changed rock'n'roll irrevocably, and the world beyond.

This 715-page tome covers six years and chronicles McCartney's life on an almost day-to-day basis. That's because McCartney does something virtually every day. He works. Constantly. Songs pour out of him like water out of a tap, although it can take forever to record them to his satisfaction. The hundreds of sessions are described in exacting detail. He's not short of ideas, either.

But he is not good at listening to other opinions. When Aubrey Powell and Storm Thorgerson of the legendary Hipgnosis design company – whose modus operandi is to discuss with the client and then present ideas – fly to Los Angeles to talk about the *Venus And Mars* cover, McCartney tells them exactly what he wants and shows them the picture. Thorgerson walks out, Powell picks up the pieces. Film director Michael Lindsay-Hogg is fired abruptly after suggesting a different vision for a project. When McCartney goes surfing in Hawaii, he ignores warnings from locals about the dangers, gets swept out to sea and nearly drowns. It's the same with Wings: he tells the musicians what to play, and if they don't comply to his satisfaction he does it himself; only Denny Laine survives the span of this book. And yet McCartney insists Wings are a band. Journalists are told never to mention the Fab Four, but Macca always brings them up. "Threesomes?" he says to one writer talking about The Beatles' excesses on tour. "Try a fivesome."

Linda is another set of complexities. Many people speak of her kindness, others talk of her arrogance. Her passive-aggressive behaviour (lighting up another joint in a car minutes after being busted by a highway patrolman) masks a host of insecurities, along with her "No women in the studio" edict. And yet she and Paul are as tight as a couple can be.

The book ends with McCartney in a Tokyo prison cell after Japanese customs found eight ounces of marijuana strewn about his luggage. He had been warned explicitly by at least two people to not even think about it and, to get a visa, had signed an affidavit that he had stopped smoking dope. "People assume I was being arrogant. I wasn't. I was just being dumb."

Hugh Fielder

Placebo: This Search For Meaning

Dir: Oscar Sansom

Star-studded documentary gets deep and meaningful with Molko and Olsen.

There are some big subjects being thrown about in this film exploring the legacy and history of Placebo: the nature of fame, addiction, sexuality, the lot. Director Oscar Sansom has assembled an all-star cast including Robbie Williams, Yungblud, Shirley Manson and, incongruously, Benedict Cumberbatch to wax lyrical about the impact the band had on them, all under the conceit that they're being "secretly" recorded via surveillance camera. They're eloquent and reverential. Brian Molko and Stefan Olsen take a long, sober look at their own legacy, and some of the archive footage is a beautiful reminder of just how much Placebo shook up the blokey Britpop landscape and made their otherness their superpower. But the moments the film pops out of its own grandiosity – in the sweet footage of the band with their friend David Bowie, or in the polished live performances from their most recent album – are where the real joy is to be found.

Emma Johnston

Rush 1973 To 1982: Every Album, Every Song

Richard James *SONICBOND*

The prog icons' first 10 years, track by iconic track.

The strength of SonicBond's *On Track* series is passion; these song-by-song career overviews are written for fans by fans. Richard James goes deep on everything Rush released from 1973's debut single *Not Fade Away* (a cover of the Buddy Holly classic) to 1982's divisive yet brilliant *Signals* album. He's got a nice eye for detail – who knew there was a connection between 1974's *Take A Friend* and boy band McFly? – and a chummy style.

But *Rush 1973 To 1982* also shares a weakness with every other book in the series: a lack of access to the band means it's centred on others' descriptions and interpretations of each song, backed up by pre-existing quotes – not disastrous, but hard to sustain across 100-plus entries. Still, Rush fans will drink it up like the milk of paradise, which is the job it aims to do.

Dave Everley

Who Knows: The Making Of A Rock Movie

Tony Klinger *GIVE GET-GO BOOKS*

The kid stays in the picture.

When in 1977 Tony Klinger signed up to direct the definitive documentary about The Who, he thought it would be the cherry atop a glittering filmmaking career. No stranger to the rock'n'roll world, he had already worked with Deep Purple. Alas his involvement in *The Kids Are Alright* rapidly became a seat-of-the-pants nightmare, not helped by Pete Townshend's appointment of Jeff Stein, a fan-turned-director, who took over the picture.

Klinger tells his story straight and direct, albeit from a single viewpoint. He can be lurid at times, and his chief bugbear is what he calls Townshend's "angry young man pose" while possessing all the trappings of fame (and Roger Daltrey's personal helicopter). Although he unwillingly winds up as co-producer and falls out with everyone, his account is not so much sour grapes as the wisdom of hindsight.

None of the characters come out of it unscathed, with the honourable exception of Dougal Butler, Keith Moon's steadfast assistant. And, of course, Moon died aged 32 three months after filming, so it became a cinematic monument capturing the final performances at Shepperton and Kilburn. Rock photographer Danny Clifford provides previously unseen photographs and memories.

Claudia Elliott

Mute

Dave Barbarossa

ASTRAL HORIZON

Burundi-beating Bow Wow Wow-er's second book.

Following up a debut novel like *Mud Sharks* is a big ask. Dave Barbarossa has already played his ace, already stunned cynics with the unexpected revelation that here was a musician – a drummer, mark you, a representative of that noble profession of geezers who hit stuff for a living – who could

BETTMANN/GETTY

actually write. That said, Dave's no ordinary slapper of the skins. Initially with Adam And The Ants and then, more centrally, with Bow Wow Wow, he expanded the possibilities of post-punk percussion. Nevertheless, he's still a musician writing a book.

Anyway, *Mud Sharks* (which you really ought to read) is a cracker: insightful, emotional, semi-autobiographical, it's Dave's story, told brilliantly, and so uniquely descriptive you could actually smell the frying onions.

Mute isn't exactly more of the same, but inhabits the same world; characters from Barbe's musical past are thinly veiled (himself included), and you'll have enormous fun identifying who's (almost) who. *Mute*'s not so much about music, nor even the thrills and spills associated with the business of rock'n'roll, it's more about the people who make the music, the lies they tell themselves and the abuse they're prepared to take to maintain their perilous position in the game.

Ian Fortnam

Slade In Flame At 50

Ian Edmundson & Chris Selby *NOIZE BOOKS*

Celebration of glam icons' celluloid masterpiece.

Slade's pivotal contribution to British rock'n'roll has long been underplayed. It's a mystery that this book's authors, über-fans responsible for *The Noize: The Slade Discography*, have long been at pains to rectify.

This thoroughly researched celebration of Slade's superb 1975 feature film is a further reminder of the band's brilliance – and their willingness to take risks. Heavily influenced by Nic Roeg's film *Performance*, *Slade In Flame* tells the story of the fictional Flame, a band torn apart by unscrupulous agent Ron Harding (Johnny Shannon) and oleaginous A&R man Robert Seymour (Tom Conti). Hard-hitting and almost relentlessly bleak, it shone a light on the brutal realities of the pop process – causing consternation among the band's (largely) teenage fan base who assumed the break-up of the fictional Flame was a harbinger of Slade's own demise.

The authors have clearly gone to great pains to do their subject justice, providing the transcript of a TV interview on *The Russell Harty Show*, and flagging up the film's memorable cameos – not least Alan Lake as ill-fated former singer Jack Daniels.

Featuring exclusive interviews with Don Powell, Jim Lea and Tom Conti, among others, and packed full of press cuttings and fan-friendly trivia – including extracts from Don Powell's annotated original script, and original sketches by costume designer Steve Megson - this book is essential for both Sladeaholics and any student of rock cinema.

Paul Moody

Hell On Wheels

'Recorded by' Greg Jacobs *UNIVERSITY OF HELL PRESS*

On-the-road hi-jinks retold and retooled.

Thirty years ago, band manager Greg Jacobs compiled a collection of road anecdotes for a book on San Diego imprint Rockpress. Now he's sourced enough for a sequel, padded out with some 'greatest hits' from the out-of-press first one. They include The Almighty's Ricky Warwick recalling a cross-channel acid trip where they all superglued toy caterpillars to their eyebrows; Nashville Pussy's Corey Parker relating the tale of being rescued by Lemmy from a wardrobe malfunction; and Rocket From The Crypt getting savaged by the same dog twice. Another bunch of young punks learn the hard way that Michigan is a 'no-fault state' for drink driving (who knew?) after an errant motorist literally lands on top of their tour bus.

Elsewhere we are charmed by the miracle of TSOL's missing guitar, Bad Religion's van hallucinations, and Jesus Lizard's war with Six Finger Satellite, which all started, like many a deadly dispute, with mayonnaise. Some of the best tales come from lesser-known names, but there's a good one that involves Glen Matlock, Ronnie Wood and Kenney Jones's kettle drums.

It's not all gold, but given the book's format, if one story seems a bit 'meh', don't worry, there's another on the way shortly, just long enough to accompany a tour bus pee.

Johnny Sharp

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Tom Morello: a trademark guitar sound and some phenomenal playing.

Tom Morello

He's best known as the guitarist with Rage Against The Machine, but there's much more of his playing to marvel at than that.

You tend to hear Tom Morello before you see him. One of the best compliments you could pay the inimitable guitarist is that you can't always say whether you're listening to someone playing a guitar, or some computerised trickery creating otherworldly sounds. His towering, iconic riffs are perfectly weighted with whammy-bar wizardry, dazzling dive-bombs and unmistakable lead breaks – all of it inherently Morello.

Born in Harlem, New York City in 1964, Thomas Baptist Morello is best known for his time with game-changing, politically motivated rap-rockers Rage Against The Machine, but his storied career and contributions to rock at large are huge. Together with vocalist Zack de la Rocha, drummer Brad Wilk and bass player Tim Commerford, Morello manifested his political beliefs and rock'n'roll activism in the form of the now legendary RATM. Their formidable form during the 90s made them one of the decade's defining bands. But they weren't built for longevity, and split for the first time in 2000.

In 2009, their 1992 single *Killing In The Name*, so potent in its message of defiance, inexplicably became the UK's Christmas No.1, after a guerilla social-media campaign protesting against *The X Factor*'s festive dominance with crap ballads. It sold a record-breaking half a million downloads, and made a ton of money for charity.

Minus de la Rocha, Morello's second stab at the upper echelons of rock came soon after with Audioslave, featuring ex-Soundgarden singer Chris Cornell. Morello also featured as a boss alongside Slash in the videogame *Guitar Hero III: Legends Of Rock*. (Bravo if you managed to get past A.I Tom on expert mode.)

In recent years – without a long-term band – Morello has advanced his own brand, releasing several diverse solo albums and stamping his trademark sound on a growing number of high-profile collaborations. He was even a member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band for a time. Last summer he released a song with Def Leppard, and in 2023 he featured on tracks by both Måneskin and Babymetal.

Despite reunions, the most recent in 2019, RATM rumours have continued to percolate, although Brad Wilk suggested earlier in 2024 that the band is over for good.

Now 60, whatever Tom Morello does (or doesn't do) next, his legacy as a trailblazing guitar phenomenon is assured.

Chris Lord

Essential Classics

Rage Against The Machine

Rage Against The Machine *EPIC, 1992*

Explosive. Electrifying. Revolutionary. We could throw plenty more superlatives at RATM's debut and still fall short of illustrating its generational power. It's one of those rare, near-flawless albums that plays like a 'greatest hits' collection. To a backdrop of searing socio-political commentary, never had rap and heavy rock been merged with such purpose and intensity, the likes of *Know Your Enemy, Freedom, Bombtrack* and *Killing In The Name* all blazing with singer Zack de la Rocha's incendiary lyrics and Morello's giant, propulsive riffs. A once-in-a-lifetime album.

Audioslave

Audioslave *EPIC/INTERSCOPE, 2002*

Timing is everything in music. By 2001, RATM and Soundgarden had split, leaving Morello, Cornell and co. in limbo. Enter Audioslave with their blockbuster self-titled debut, brilliantly blending the alchemy of both bands. *Cochise*, with its famously climactic opening, is rightly the band's biggest song. *Set It Off* is as gloriously pissed off as Rage's best. And it's fascinating to hear Morello's guitars shimmer alongside Cornell on the pensive *Like A Stone*.

A supergroup's DNA is almost pre-programmed to make a big noise and evaporate as quickly as they began, but *Audioslave* remains a powerful show of how thrilling hard rock can be.

EITAN MASKEVICH/PRESS

Superior Reputation cementing

Rage Against The Machine

Evil Empire *EPIC, 1996*

It isn't an exact science, but there is truth to the notion that some of the best music is born from tension. Explaining the gap between RATM albums, Morello once revealed that it took a while for everyone to be singing from the same creative hymn sheet.

The by-product is *Evil Empire*'s greater hip-hop influence, without losing any of the band's fiery edge. De la Rocha is in the form of his life on *Vietnow*, and *Bulls On Parade* is a bona fide classic – Morello's colossal, stop-start riff one of his greatest guitar parts. That dreaded second-album slump didn't exist in Rage's universe.

Rage Against The Machine

The Battle Of Los Angeles *EPIC, 1999*

RATM's third might have lacked the gut-punching ferocity of its predecessors, but *The Battle Of Los Angeles* still found the band in excellent form. And although they'd established themselves as a major act, no amount of mainstream attention was about to dilute their visceral rap rock. *Testify*, taking aim at the media with Orwellian motifs, and Grammy-winning single *Guerrilla Radio* are trademark fists-in-the-sky Rage. *Sleep Now In The Fire* is best known for its music video. "No matter what happens, don't stop playing," director Michael Moore instructed. Rage on.

Audioslave

Out Of Exile *EPIC/INTERSCOPE, 2005*

If detractors thought they had Audioslave sussed as 'Rage without the rapper', the band's second album all but squashed such sentiment. *Out Of Exile* didn't veer too much from the formula of their debut, but it did display greater dynamism and introspection, with *Doesn't Remind Me* – featuring Morello's stunning but unnecessary guitar solo – lead single *Be Yourself* (basically *Like A Stone*'s spiritual successor) and anthemic opener *Your Time Has Come* leaning into the masterly rhythm section that set RATM apart. A quality album, it marked Audioslave's true introduction as a singular entity.

Tom Morello

The Atlas Underground Fire *MOM + POP MUSIC, 2021*

Having a unique and identifiable sound like Morello's lends itself well to collaborative work. And on this, his guest-packed, genre-hopping solo record, it's Tom calling in the favours. *The War Inside*, featuring country star Chris Stapleton, is charming, with typically sparkling guitars from Morello; Bring Me The Horizon and Morello are a match made in heaven on electro stomper *Let's Get The Party Started; The Achilles List* with Damian Marley goes even harder. This album has plenty of the Morello we know and love, but here he showed he could evolve and move with the times.

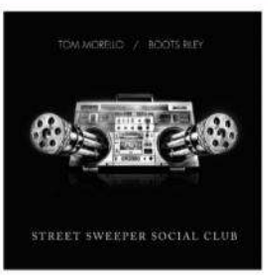
Good Worth exploring

Audioslave

Revelations *EPIC/INTERSCOPE, 2006*

Audioslave's second album in the space of a year was also their last. Which is a shame, because they introduced fresh elements on *Revelations*. Morello's "Led Zeppelin-meets-Earth, Wind And Fire" description was a stretch, but *One And The Same*'s irresistible, wah-wah-soaked funk-rock is quite the departure for the man who sang *Jesus Christ Pose*. *Somedays* is quintessential Audioslave, with added sonic citrus (and congas), while captivating closer *Moth* builds around a doomy riff.

Weeks after RATM announced a reunion performance at Coachella 2007, Cornell would leave the band, citing musical and personality conflicts.



Street Sweeper Social Club

Street Sweeper Social Club *WARNER MUSIC GROUP, 2009*

After Audioslave's break-up came some of Morello's most underrated work of his career. The guitarist collaborated with activist rapper Raymond 'Boots' Riley on their first and only album as Street Sweeper Social club, merging rap-rock angst and West Coast hip-hop. Snappy single *Promenade* could be funky Rage fronted by Pharrell Williams – routinely glorious Morello playing included. *Fight! Smash! Win!* and *The Squeeze* sound like two of the best B-sides Rage never released. There's an obvious pattern here, but SSSC, at their best, are a playful, admirable nod to Morello's greatest band.

Prophets Of Rage

Prophets Of Rage *FANTASY, 2017*

While the subsequent Atlas Underground albums were about Morello showcasing his dynamism, Prophets Of Rage were all about nostalgia. Morello and fellow Rage/Audioslave alumni Wilk and Commerford formed the short-lived group together with Public Enemy's Chuck D and DJ Lord, and Cypress Hill's B-Real. Having talked up being "the soundtrack of resistance" and "an elite task force of revolutionary musicians", Prophets Of Rage benefited from the more combustible nature of its members' earlier work, and the rap-rock collective's chemistry is undeniable. This is a more-than-decent project.

Avoid

The Nightwatchman

One Man Revolution *EPIC, 2007*

Really, any of the three albums Morello released as The Nightwatchman – his political folk alter ego – could have landed here, but the first, *One Man Revolution*, is just about the most insipid. These 13 songs are essentially Morello armed with acoustic guitar, occasional harmonica and quasi-Bob Dylan baritone. Po-faced and overly earnest to the point of parody, pick any song at random and a Dewey Cox impression will fit in seamlessly. Lyrically, Morello takes aim at Bush's America and all the usual Bad Guys, but with the act of protest at heart it's more likely to send his autocratic targets to sleep.

Essential Playlist

Bombtrack
Rage Against The Machine

Killing In The Name
Rage Against The Machine

Bullet In The Head
Rage Against The Machine

Know Your Enemy
Rage Against The Machine

Bulls On Parade
Rage Against The Machine

Testify
Rage Against The Machine

Guerrilla Radio
Rage Against The Machine

Cochise
Audioslave

Like A Stone
Audioslave

Set It Off
Audioslave

Your Time Has Come
Audioslave

Be Yourself
Audioslave

Somedays
Audioslave

Promenade
Street Sweeper Social Club

Rise Up
Cypress Hill featuring Tom Morello

The Ghost Of Tom Joad (2014)
Bruce Springsteen featuring Tom Morello

Radical Eyes
Prophets Of Rage

The War Inside
Tom Morello featuring Chris Stapleton

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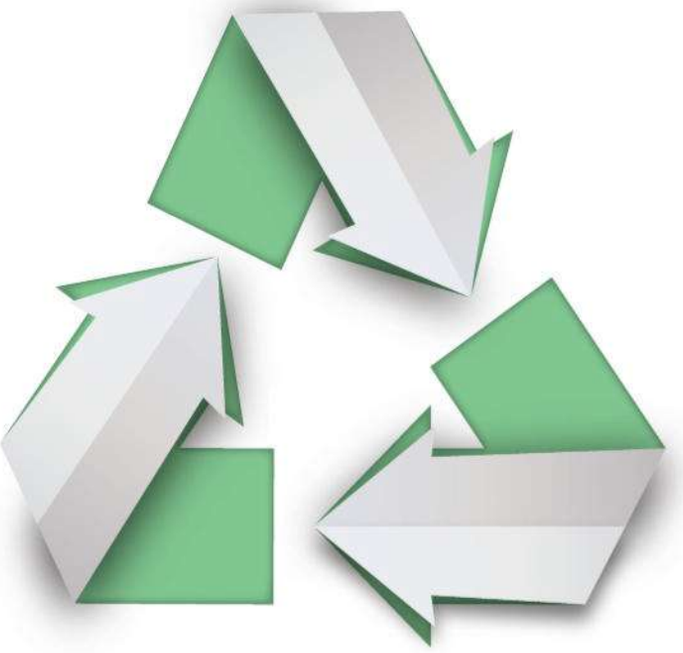

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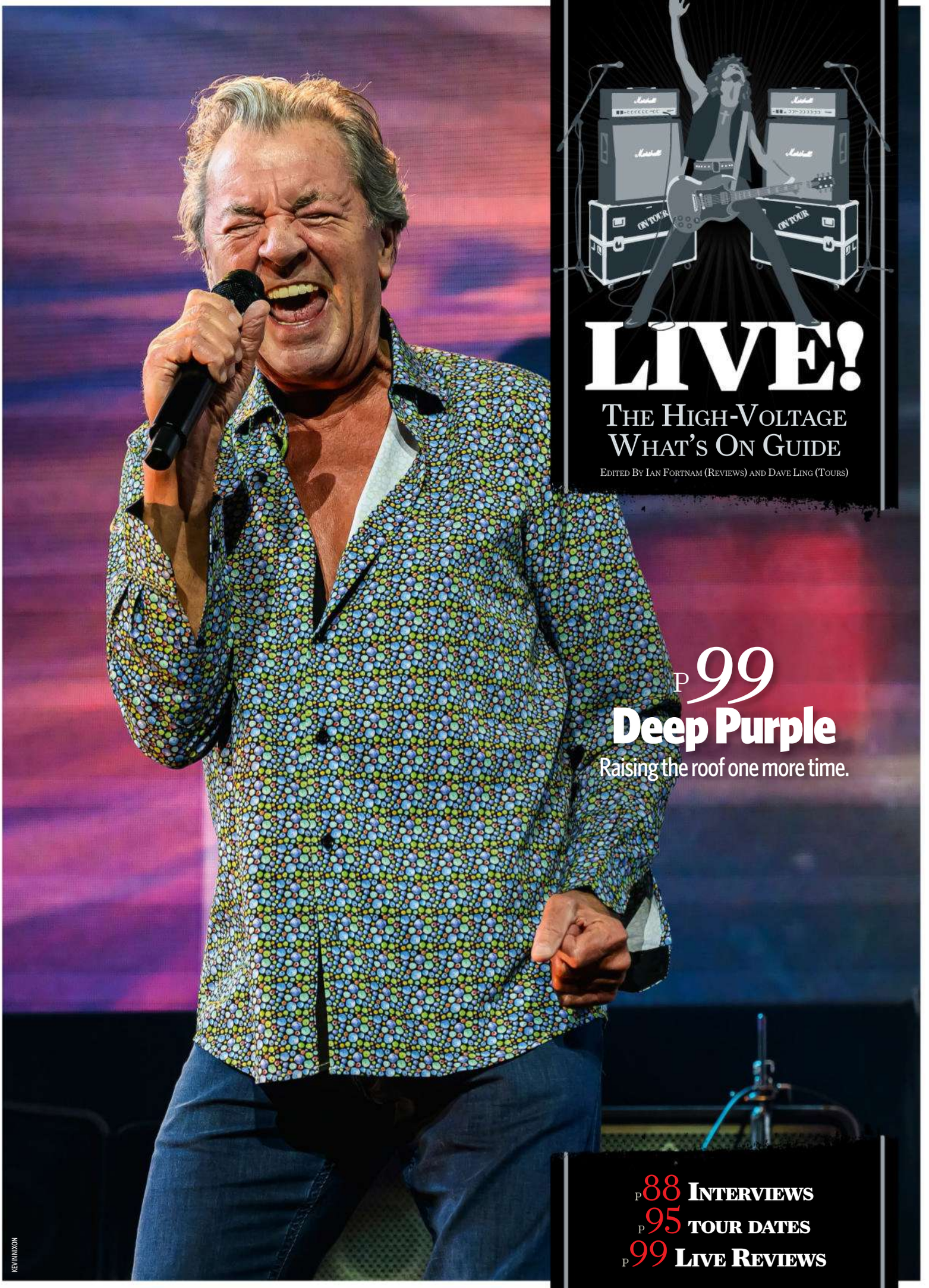

LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P99 **Deep Purple**
Raising the roof one more time.

P88 **Interviews**
P95 **Tour Dates**
P99 **Live Reviews**

KEVIN NIXON

"We often hear: 'I don't like country music but I do like you guys.' I think the reason it works is that there's something there for everyone."

Brothers Osborne

The leading lights of the outlaw country movement play UK and Ireland shows in January.

Brothers TJ and John Osborne were born in Maryland but relocated to Nashville in 2012. Brothers Osborne have received a dozen Grammy nominations, one of which became a win in 2022 for Best Country Duo/Group Performance. With four full-length albums to their name, they have become leading lights of the burgeoning outlaw country movement. Younger sibling TJ previews their return to the UK, having appeared at this year's Country 2 Country Festival.

You kind of remind us of that famous song by Donny and Marie Osmond, A *Little Bit Country -A Little Bit Rock 'N' Roll*.
[Laughs but sounding mildly aghast] That's maybe not the coolest way of getting our message across, but yeah… exactly. We are the product of what we grew up listening to. Some country music is terrible but I still love it, and we like to come at things with a high energy. We get the electric guitars going and we hit it hard.

Is one sibling more rock'n'roll than the other?
You'd expect John, as a guitar player, to be far more into it, but that's not really true. No matter how hard we try we just can't polish ourselves up and make it too slick.

What makes the two styles so compatible?
We could talk for an hour about that. I guess the origins of all music go back to the same things, and I don't think that too many people worry a great deal about labelling genres. For the longest time, what was and wasn't considered country music was very specific, but that's no longer true. It's why when you come to see us there will be folks from all walks of life.

With a London show at London's Hammersmith Apollo, this the band's biggest tour so far. Why do you think you connect with UK audiences?
One strange thing that we often hear is: "I don't like country music but I do like you guys." I think the reason it works is that there's something there for everyone.

KEVIN NIXON

Our goal was to keep on playing bigger and bigger venues. We made that investment financially and in terms of time spent, and by the time we arrive this will be a sold-out tour. I love that the crowds in Britain know all of our material. They're really willing to take a deep dive, whereas in the US we pretty much have to stick to the hits.

Within the traditional country scene, it must have been very difficult to come out as gay. Four years down the line, how has life changed?
It's completely different. I'm still the same person but I can be open and free. I wasn't that inclined to talk about it, but there were a lot of people out there like me from that community, and I also wanted to show the general public that they have no clue about who is gay or who is straight. We have a song called *I Don't Remember Me (Before You)* which was written with Shane McAnally, who coincidentally is also gay. Now, that song takes on a whole new meaning for me. I'm much more comfortable in my own skin.

Did it impact upon the group's fan base?
It most certainly did. We lost some fans and we gained some new ones. I certainly don't waste a whole lot of time thinking about that. I feel like I'm connected to the audience in a way I never was before.

Around the time the band last spoke with *Classic Rock*, in mid-2023, John was dealing with some mental health issues.
He's in a far better place now. He's a father with twins. John would be the first to tell you that he now takes medication to deal with an imbalance. Both of us have realigned what being successful actually means. Once you 'make it', where do you go next? There's no such thing as a finish line in music. But we are far happier now.

Who's the support act on the tour?
It's a guy named Tyler Braden [a singer and guitarist from Alabama]. He is awesome, and it will be an amazing pairing for us.

You've released a new digital-only four-song EP, *Break Mine*, apparently to satisfy fan demand.
We write all the time, though I do like to take a break whenever I can to avoid losing my mind – or my love of what I'm doing.

Are the wheels in motion for releasing a new full-length album?
We're in the creative wheelhouse right now. Some songs are recorded and finished. What we need now is a conversation about how to release them. It would be nice to have a song or two out before we come over. We may even play them live, but let's see about that.

Someone puts a gun to your head and demands a decision – country or rock'n'roll?
I can't plead The Fifth?

No. It must be one or the other.
In that case, for me it's got to be country. I like them both, but if I want to get in a good mood then playing some old Merle Haggard or Hank Williams always works. Those are my roots. **DL**

The first show is in Dublin on January 17.

KAI R IOACHIM/PRESS

Cutting Crew

The not-one-hit-wonders celebrate their 40th anniversary.

With one of rock music's most iconic power ballads, *(I Just) Died In Your Arms*, in 1986 Cutting Crew topped the chart in several countries including the US. As they prepare to celebrate their 40th anniversary, we caught up with singer and band leader Nick Van Eede.

2025 marks four decades of Cutting Crew. How does that make you feel?
It makes me proud, I suppose. We've weathered the storm, experiencing highs and lows, and I'm busier now than I was even during the late eighties. We have seventy-two shows lined-up until next summer.

Following 19 headline dates in January and February, Cutting Crew support Kim Wilde for nine gigs. What should we expect?
Kim just phoned up, and I figured why the hell not? Our own gigs are performed as a trio, a format that allows me to mix storytelling with the songs. It works really well. We're in a very good situation, we've a couple of records that will keep on being played until it's time for my daughter to pop her clogs. *(I Just) Died In Your Arms* is a song that will be handed down for generations.

We can't legitimately call Cutting Crew a one-hit wonder, because *I've Been In Love Before* was a US Top 10 hit and dented the Top 30 here at home, but it's probably something you hear a lot?
[Shrugs] I used to get a bit tetchy about that back in the day, but now I embrace it. That song has been my passport, my bank manager and my lover down through the years. It has seven million broadcasts in America, so I guess you can say it works. It's up there with *Help!* by The Beatles, it's ridiculous.

How true is the tale that its title popped into your head while you were getting jiggy with a girlfriend?
It was afterwards. The morning after. That's all I'm saying, I'm a happily married man.

What's the weirdest place or situation in which you've heard the song?
I'd been doing some gigs in Tanzania with Leslie Mandoki Soulmates, an amazing German band that was full of superstars, and we were treated to going out on safari. Driving along, we were stopped and these gangsta guys demanded money, when suddenly it came on the radio. Everyone was hoping that the title wouldn't be relevant to our situation.

There must have been some unusual cover versions. Have you heard any?
I could tell you about two or three gangsta-rap versions I've heard. There are dance versions, also Euro-pop versions. Some are horrible, but there are a couple of good Latino ones.

Back in 2016 Cutting Crew teamed up for a UK tour with the progressive/psychedelic/pop-rock band Blurred Vision, essentially as one group. That was slightly unusual.
I imagine it was quite baffling for the audience but there were some good moments.

Who comes to see Cutting Crew in 2025?
Sixty-year-olds are the main demographic – men and women – but we also get younger ones, right down to twenty-somethings. People find us through all sorts of ways. For example, we were in *Stranger Things*. We didn't take off way the way Kate Bush did, but it didn't do us any harm. **DL**

The headline tour runs from Jan 31 to March 1.

"I still get nervous before going on stage. I never thought we'd play the O2 Arena, so I'm super-nervous but super-excited as well."

Bullet For My Valentine

Touring with Trivium, they'll be "throwing the kitchen sink at making the show look fantastic".

Frequently lambasted for deviating from – and sometimes returning to – an original metalcore blueprint, Welsh four-piece Bullet For My Valentine have nevertheless become extremely popular, and since forming in 1998 the 'bangers from Bridgend have notched more than a billion Spotify streams in the US. Guitarist Michael 'Padge' Paget checks in on the eve of a co-headlining UK arena tour with Floridian metalheads Trivium.

Bullet For My Valentine and Trivium's five-date arena tour concludes at the 20,000-capacity O2 Arena in London.
[Laughing] That's not too shabby, is it? No pressure, though.

How does it make you feel?
It'll be emotional for both bands because of the 'twenty year' thing [BFMV are celebrating two decades of debut *The Poison*, with Trivium revisiting their second record, *Ascendancy*]. It's been a crazy journey with all sorts of memories – ups and downs. Overall though, it's a very nice, warm feeling. I'm so proud that we've come this far.

***The Poison* and *Ascendancy* are each regarded as the crown jewels in their respective catalogues, so it should be quite a show.**
Yeah. All we want now is for the production side of things to match that, and from what we've been told, it will. We're throwing the kitchen sink at making the show look fantastic.

For a band that began covering Metallica and Nirvana songs 26 years ago, this is an incredible feat. Beyond the obvious cliché of 'don't give up', how did you achieve it?
It's all about passion. We love what we do. The band has been through so much, and I don't want to get into that, but we've been to hell and back. Our band was so important to us that we endured all of that stuff [criticism] and we came out the other side.

Did the negativity ever come close to causing the band to break up?
Oh yeah. Loads of times. Especially the last few years. But we continued, we kept our hearts pure and we're still here.

Your seventh album, titled simply *Bullet For My Valentine*, released in 2021, was something of a reset, reaffirming tha band's heavy roots.
Yeah. There was a lot of anger on that album. It was very pure and very honest.

Out of all the many people who must have said the band would never be successful, who did you most delight in telling: "I told you so?"
Those comments don't help, and I try not to think like that. If someone doesn't believe in us, then that's their choice. All it does is drive us harder. What are they doing [in life] that's so important?

How well do you know Trivium?
A few years back we toured with them in America. They're really nice guys, we get on with them really well. What a great album *Ascendancy* is. It'll be great to hear that every night.

Will there be a sense of competition?
Not at all. We are flip-flopping [as headliners]. Some bands have inflated egos and whatnot, but this is going to be a walk in the park.

Will the follow-up to *Bullet For My Valentine* continue down that same path of returning to your roots?
The majority of our new songs are very different for us. However, some are like the last album and others lean towards *The Poison*. It'll be out next year, and [stylistically] it could go anywhere.

With so many of our classic bands retiring, do you feel any pressure as potential flag-bearers of the future?
I suppose maybe just a little bit. I still get nervous before going on stage. I never thought we'd play the O2 Arena, so I'm super-nervous but super-excited as well. **DL**

The tour ends in London on February 1.

CHARLIE RAVEN/ALAMY

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THE GUITAR SHOW 25

&

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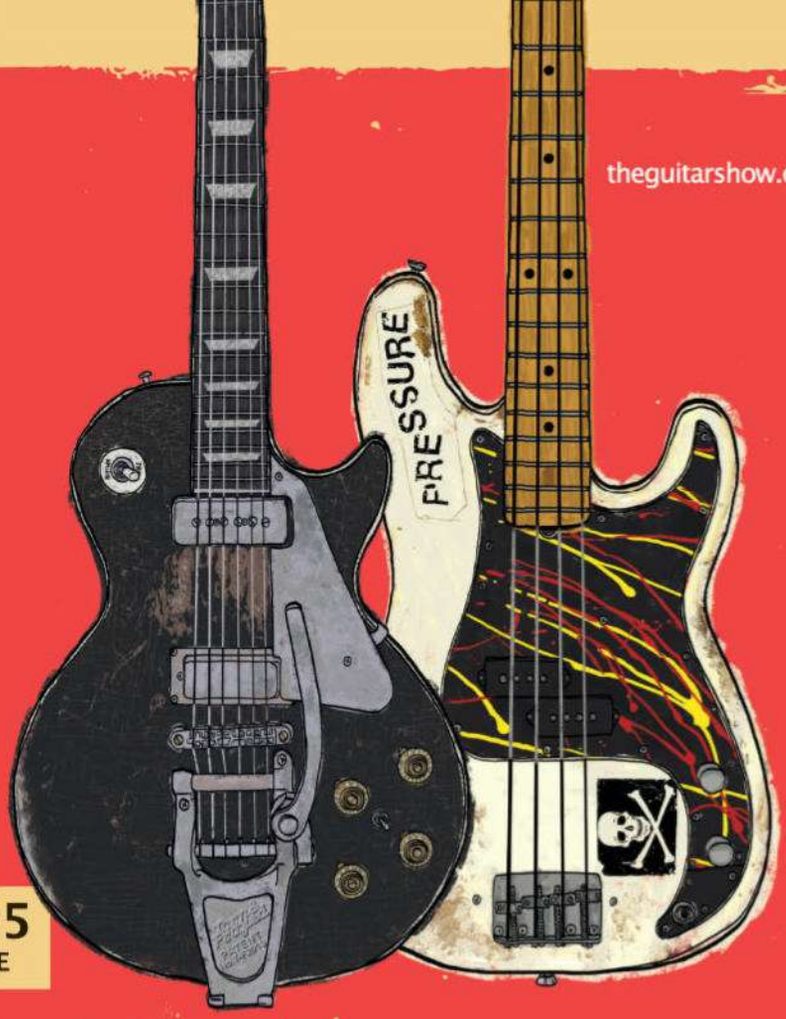

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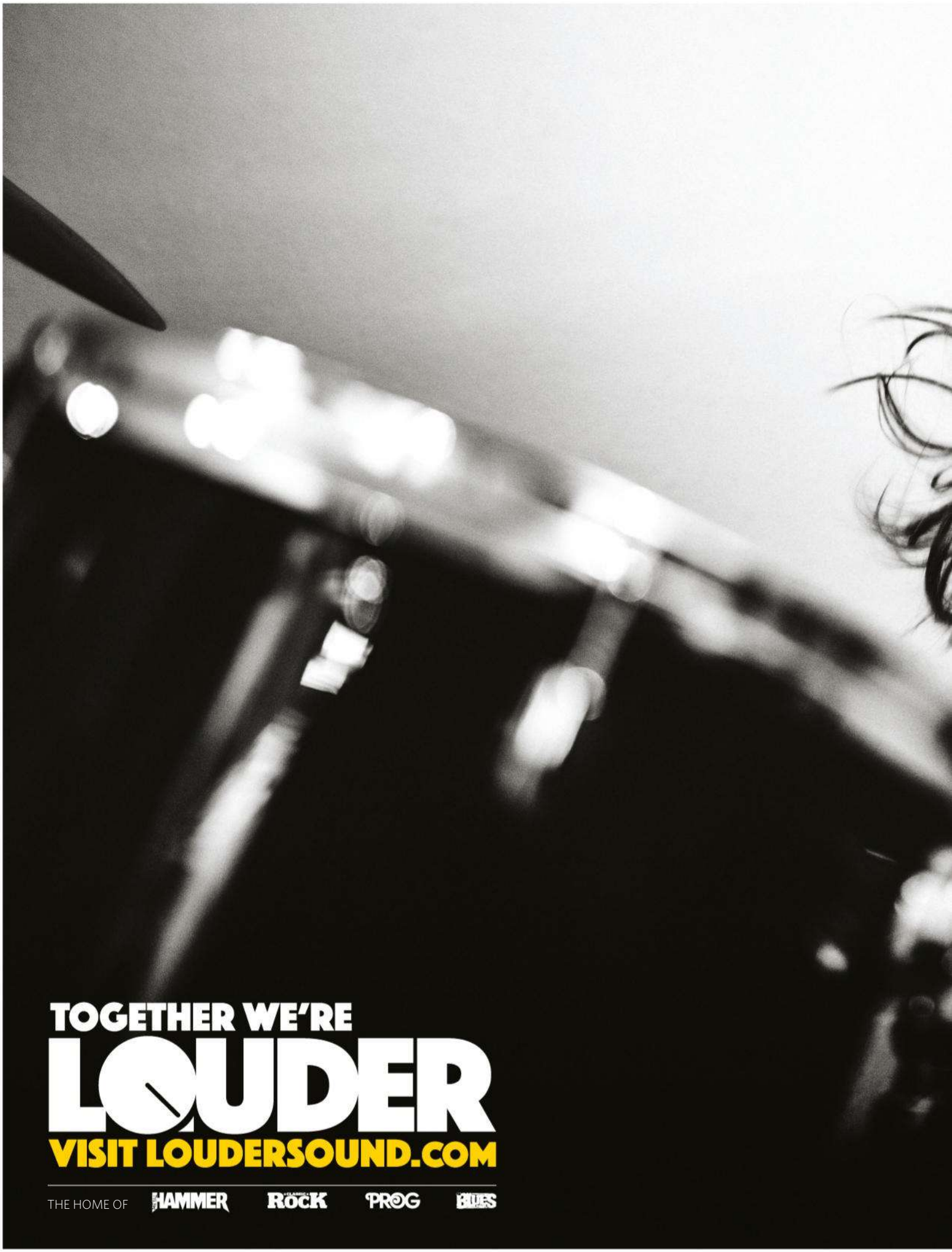
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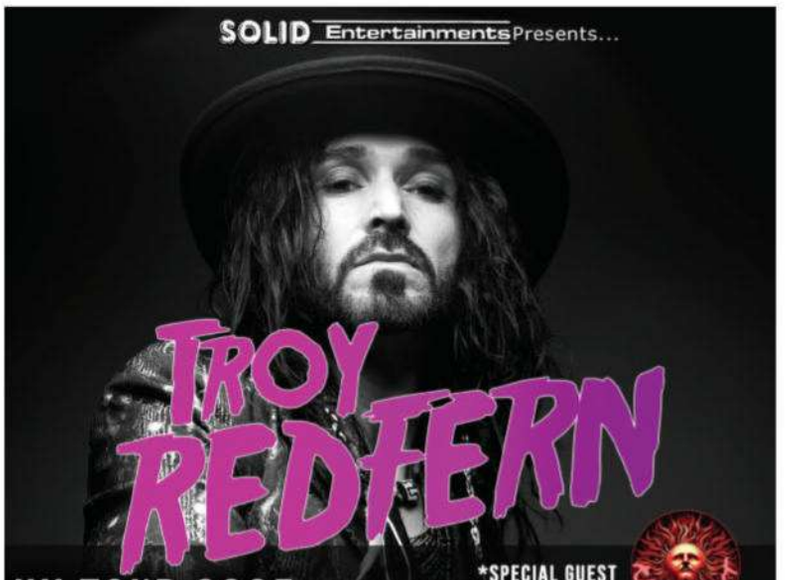

TROY REDFERN

*SPECIAL GUEST

RED GIANT

UK TOUR 2025

SAT 1ST MAR - LEAMINGTON SPA THE TEMPERENCE
SUN 2ND MAR - LOVE LIVE FESTIVAL
MON 3RD MAR - KINROSS GREEN HOTEL
TUE 4TH MAR - EDINBURGH BANNERMANS
WED 5TH MAR - BARNOLDSWICK MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE
THU 1ST MAY - GRIMSBY YARDBIRDS ROCK CLUB*
FRI 2ND MAY - STOCKTON ON TEES BLUES AT THE BAY*
SAT 3RD MAY - DONCASTER THE LEOPARD*
SUN 4TH MAY - CHESTER LIVE ROOMS*
WED 7TH MAY - HULL ADELPHI*
THU 8TH MAY - DERBY THE FLOWERPOT*
FRI 9TH MAY - BIRMINGHAM JOE JOE JIMS*
SAT 10TH MAY - WOLVERHAMPTON THE GIFFORD*
SUN 11TH MAY - BLACKPOOL WATERLOO MUSIC BAR*
THU 15TH MAY - STOWMARKET JOHN PEEL CENTRE*
FRI 16TH MAY - HASTINGS THE CARLISLE*
SUN 18TH MAY - SHEFFIELD GREYSTONES*
MON 19TH MAY - YORK FULFORD ARMS*
TUE 20TH MAY - MANCHESTER NIGHT AND DAY*
WED 21ST MAY - OXFORD BULLINGDON*
THU 22ND MAY - NEW MILTON FOREST ARTS CENTRE*
FRI 23RD MAY - ALDERSHOT WEST END CENTRE*
SAT 24TH MAY - WINCHESTER THE ARC*
SUN 25TH MAY - WORTHING THE FACTORY*
MON 26TH MAY - CHISLEHURST BEAVERWOOD*
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THU 5th JUNE WINCHESTER The Arc
FRI 6th JUNE ALDERSHOT West End Centre
SAT 7th JUNE NEW MILTON Forest Arts Centre
WED 11th JUNE WORTHING The Factory
THU 12th JUNE BRIDPORT Electric Palace
THU 26th JUNE CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION 2

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Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	May 8
Manchester	AO Arena	May 9
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 10
Aberdeen	P&J Live	May 11
Glasgow	Hydro	May 13
London	O2 Arena	May 15
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	May 16
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 17
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	May 18

AIRBOURNE
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 5
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 6
Leeds	Stylus	Mar 7
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 9

ALABAMA 3
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 7
Dublin	Academy	Mar 8
Limerick	Dolans	Mar 9
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Mar 16
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 20
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 21
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Mar 22
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Mar 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 28
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 29
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 30
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 3
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 4
Northampton	Roadmender	Apr 5

ALESTORM, ENSIFERUM, TÝR, HEIDEVOLK, ELVENKING
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 16
Edinburgh	Academy	Jan 17
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jan 18
London	Brixton Academy	Jan 19

ARENA
Chepstow	Winter's End Festival	Apr 27
Kinross	Green Hotel	Apr 29
Bilston	Robin 2	May 1
Norwich	Waterfront	May 2
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	May 3

RICHARD ASHCROFT, THE LIGHTNING SEEDS, THE ZUTONS
Oxfordshire	Blenheim Palace	Jun 19

ATOMIC ROOSTER
Liverpool	Swinging Arm	Jan 10
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Jan 11
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jan 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 27
Wakefield	Venue 23	Mar 29

AVANTASIA
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 24

BABYMETAL, POPPY, BAMBIE THUG
London	O2 Arena	May 30

BAD TOUCH, THE DUST CODA
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 7
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Mar 8
Glasgow	Cathouse	Mar 9
Manchester	Academy	Mar 11
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 12
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 13
London	Islington Academy	Mar 14

KRIS BARRAS (UNPLUGGED)
London	St Pancras Church	Jan 31

BLAZE BAYLEY
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 9
Southampton	Joiners	May 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 11
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	May 15
Swansea	Sin City	May 16
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 17
Bradford	Nightrain	May 18

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT, WHEN RIVERS MEET
London	Palladium	May 25

JOE BONAMASSA
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Apr 21
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Apr 23
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 25
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 26
Brighton	Centre	Apr 27

JOE BONAMASSA PLAYS RORY GALLAGHER
Cork	Live At The Marquee	Jul 1-3

BRAVE RIVAL
Cardiff	Acapella Studios	Jan 30
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 2
Barton-on-Humber	The Ropewalk	Feb 8
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 9
Hartlepool	The Steelies	Feb 15
Ripley	Town Hall	Feb 22
Worthing	Factory Live	May 30

THE BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Feb 1
Bristol	Marble Factory	Feb 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 4
Glasgow	Barrowland	Feb 6
Liverpool	Olympia	Feb 7
Leeds	Beckett University Union	Feb 8
Newcastle	NX	Feb 9
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Feb 11
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Feb 12
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 14
Southampton	Guildhall	Feb 15
London	Brixton Academy	Feb 16
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 18
Brighton	Dome	Feb 19
Cardiff	University Great Hall	Feb 20

ELKIE BROOKS
Dartford	Orchard West	Jan 9
Yarm	Princess Alexandra	Jan 17
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Jan 25
London	Cadogan Hall	Feb 8
Gateshead	The Glasshouse	Feb 15
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Feb 21
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 28
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Mar 2
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Mar 7
Salford	The Lowry	Mar 16
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 20
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Mar 28
York	Barbican	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	May 27
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 29

BROTHERS OSBORNE, TYLER BRADEN
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Jan 17
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Jan 18
Glasgow	Academy	Jan 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Jan 23
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 25
Leeds	Academy	Jan 26
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 28
Bristol	Academy	Jan 29
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 30

BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE, TRIVIUM
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jan 26, 27
Glasgow	Hydro	Jan 28
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jan 30
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jan 31
London	O2 Arena	Feb 1

DAN BYRNE
Winter's End Festival	Trecco Bay	Feb 1
Chester	Live Rooms	Feb 6
Manchester	Retro	Feb 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 8
London	Islington Academy	Feb 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 12
Glasgow	Hug & Pint	Feb 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Feb 14
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 15

CAGE THE ELEPHANT, SUNFLOWER BEAN, GIRL TONES
Glasgow	Academy	Feb 13
Manchester	Apollo	Feb 14
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Feb 16
London	Brixton Academy	Feb 17

JOHN CALE
Nottingham	Playhouse	Mar 20
London	Royal Festival Hall	Mar 21
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 23
Glasgow	Pavilion	Mar 24
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Mar 25
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 27
Cardiff	New Theatre	Mar 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Mar 30
Dublin	Vicar Street	Mar 31

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF MOTÖRHEAD
Southampton	1865	Feb 15

CLUTCH

The dates are a year away, but for a heavy rock groove machine this good, this powerful, it's worth planning ahead.

See below for dates. Currently December 15 to December 20 (2025).

Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 28
Leicester	Academy 2	Mar 2
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Mar 13
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Mar 14
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Mar 15
Lincoln	The Drill	Mar 20
Oxford	Academy 2	Mar 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 22
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 27
Manchester	Rebellion	Mar 28
Newcastle	The Grove	Mar 29
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 30
Derby	Hairy Dog	Apr 3
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 4
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 5
London	Islington Academy	Apr 6
Limerick	Dolan's Warehouse	Apr 18
Dublin	Whelan's	Apr 19
Belfast	Limelight 2	Apr 20

CLUTCH
Bristol	Beacon	Dec 15
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 17
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 18
Manchester	Academy	Dec 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 20

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Mar 6
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Mar 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 8
Liverpool	Rough Trade	Mar 9
Sheffield	Dorothy Pax	Mar 11
Reading	Face Bar	Mar 12
Bristol	Louisiana	Mar 13
Brighton	Hope And Ruin	Mar 14
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Mar 15
Colchester	Arts Centre	May 20
Leeds	Old Woollen	May 21
Galashiels	MacArts	May 23
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	May 24
Edinburgh	The Hive	May 25

CURVED AIR
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Nov 13
Gt Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 14
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Nov 15
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 16
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 20
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 21
Winchester	Arc	Nov 22
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 23

CUTTING CREW
Melbourne	Assembly Rooms	Jan 31
Lichfield	The Hub	Feb 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Feb 2
Worthing	Factory Live	Feb 6
Hampton	Hub Club	Feb 7
Shrewsbury	Abbey	Feb 8
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Feb 10, 11
Sheffield	The Greystones	Feb 13
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 14
Barton	The Ropewalk	Feb 15
Otley	Courthouse	Feb 16
Milton Keynes	MK11	Feb 20
Deal	Astor Theatre	Feb 21
London	Putney Hald Moon	Feb 22
St Albans	The Horn	Feb 26
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Feb 27
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 28
Camberley	Login Lounge	Mar 1

CYNIC, RIVERS OF NIHIL, BEYOND CREATION, DAATH
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 4
Dublin	Academy	Mar 5
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 6
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 9
Birmingham	XOYO	Mar 10

ROGER DALTREY
Brighton	Dome	Apr 20
London	Palladium	Apr 21
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 23
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Apr 24
Dundee	Caird Hall	Apr 26
Glasgow	Armadillo	Apr 28
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 30
Gateshead	Sage 1	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 4
Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 30
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 8

THE DARKNESS, ASH
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	May 7
Oxford	New Theatre	May 8
Swansea	Arena	May 9
Guildford	G Live	May 11
Hull	Connexin Arena	May 12
Liverpool	Guild Of Students	May 14
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	May 15
York	Barbican	May 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 18
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 20
Newcastle	City Hall	May 21
Manchester	Apollo	May 22
Bristol	Beacon Theatre	May 24
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 25
Leicester	De Montford Hall	May 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 28
London	Wembley Arena	May 29

KIM DEAL
London	Barbican Centre	Mar 1

DEFTONES, WEEZER, MORE
London	Crystal Palace Park	Jun 29

Recommended

DEWOLFF, SILVEROLLER
Glasgow	Stereo	Apr 12
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 15
Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 16
Oxford	Academy	Apr 17
London	Highbury Garage	Apr 18

WILLIE DOWLING
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Feb 7
Wakefield	Venue 23	Feb 9
Newcastle	The Cluny	Feb 10

SCOTT LEGATO/GETTY

LIVE!

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 11
Bournemouth	Anvil	Feb 13
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 14
Ballymena	The Diamond	Feb 15
Birmingham	Asylum	Feb 20
Bedford	Esquires	Feb 21

DROPKICK MURPHYS, GOGOL BORDELLO, THE SCRATCH

Birmingham	Academy	Feb 4
Glasgow	Academy	Feb 5
Manchester	Academy	Feb 6
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Feb 7
London	Alexandra Palace	Feb 8

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS

Glasgow	QMU	Jan 17
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Jan 18
Leeds	Old Woollen	Jan 19
London	January Blues Festival	Jan 20, 22,23
Bristol	St George's	Jan 24
Leamington Spa	The Assembly	Jan 25

Recommended

FISH

Haddington	Corn Exchange	Feb 18, 19
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 21
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Feb 22
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Feb 23
London	Palladium	Feb 25
Bristol	Beacon	Feb 26
Aylesbury	Waterside Arts Centre	Feb 28
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 2
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Mar 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 6
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Mar 7
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 9, 10

THE FLAMING LIPS

Birmingham	Academy	Apr 25
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 26
Dublin	Olympia	Apr 28, 29
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 1
Leeds	Academy	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 4
Bristol	Beacon Hall	May 5

FM (UNPLUGGED)

Chelmsford	Social Club	Feb 21
Poynton	Blue Funk Club	Feb 22
Kinross	Green Hotel	Feb 23
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Mar 1-3
Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 7
York	Fulford Arms	Mar 8
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 14
Huddersfield	Parish	Mar 15
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Mar 28
Frome	Vine Tree	Mar 29
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Mar 30

GREEN LUNG, UNTO OTHERS, SATAN'S SATYRS

Bristol	Marble Factory	Feb 17
Dublin	Academy	Feb 18
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 21
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 22

GHOST

Manchester	Arena	Apr 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 16
London	O2 Arena	Apr 19
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 20

GODSMACK, P.O.D., DOWNING POOL

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 7

GRAHAM GOULDMAN - HEARTFUL OF SONGS

Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Mar 5
Southport	The Atkinson	Mar 6
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 7
Newcastle-under-Lyme	New Vic	Mar 8
Cardiff	Gate Arts Centre	Mar 10
Newtown	The Hafren	Mar 11
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Mar 13
Alnwick	Playhouse	Mar 14
Manchester	RNCM	Mar 15
Leeds	City Limits Music Hall	Mar 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 17
Worthing	Factory Live	Mar 19
London	Cadogan Hall	Mar 20
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Mar 21
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Mar 22
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Mar 23

THE HALO EFFECT

Bristol	The Fleece	Jan 21
Glasgow	Slay	Jan 22
Wolverhampton	KK´s Steel Mill	Jan 23
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 24
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jan 25

BETH HART

Bristol	Beacon	Feb 18
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Feb 20
Coventry	Warwick Arts Centre	Feb 22

HAWKWIND

Gateshead	Glasshouse International Centre	Apr 17
Guildford	G Live	Apr 18
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Apr 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 20
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	May 10
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	May 10
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 11
Sheffield	City Hall	May 23
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 24
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 25
London	Barbican Centre	May 26

H.E.A.T., ART NATION, CHEZ KANE

Bristol	The Fleece	Jan 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jan 29
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 30
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jan 31
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 1

HELLOWEEN, BEST IN BLACK

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 25

JACK J HUTCHINSON, MATT PEARCE & THE MUTINY

Coulsdon	Tuesday Night Music Club	Apr 8
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 9
Guildford	Boileroom	Apr 10
London	Highbury The Grace	Apr 12
Leicester	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 13
Bradford	Nightrain	Apr 16
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 17
Hastings	The Carlisle	Apr 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 19

IRON MAIDEN, THE RAVEN AGE

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 21
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 22
Dublin	Malahide Castle	Jun 25
London	London Stadium	Jun 28
Glasgow	Hydro	Jun 30

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 23
Birmingham	Academy 2	Apr 24
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 25
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Apr 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 27
Hull	The Welly	Apr 29
Norwich	Epic Studios	Apr 30
Folkstone	Quarterhouse	Apr 1

LAURENCE JONES

Colchester	Arts Centre	Jan 9
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jan 10
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Jan 23
Cannock	The Station	Jan 24
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Jan 25
Truro	Old Bakery Studios	Jan 31
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Feb 1
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Feb 6, 7
Leeds	Old Woollen	Feb 8
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Feb 14
Glasgow	Audio	Feb 15
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Feb 21
Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 22
Dunfermline	PG Mallows	Feb 28
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Mar 1
Exeter	Phenix Arts Centre	Mar 6
Manchester	FAC251	Mar 7
Birkenhead	Futureyard	Mar 8
Woking	Fiery Bird	Mar 15
Selby	Town Hall	Mar 21
Darwen	Sunbird Records	Apr 3
Lincoln	The Drill	Apr 5
Pontardawe	Arts Centre	Apr 11
Cardiff	Acapela Studio	Apr 12
Bristol	The Exchange	May 23
Wavendon	The Stables	May 29
Dover	Booking Hall	May 30

KID KAPICHI

Huddersfield	The Parish	Mar 22
York	Crescent	Mar 23
Liverpool	Arts Club	Mar 25
Blackpool	Bootleg Social	Mar 28
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Mar 30
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Apr 3

KING KING

London	Gt Portland St 200 Club	Jan 21
Wakefield	Venue 23	Feb 1

KNOCKED LOOSE, BASEMENT, HARMS WAY, PEST CONTROL

London	Brixton Academy	Mar 17
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Mar 18

GHOST

The greatest heavy metal pantomime on earth? Oh yes it is! But there's a lot more to these Swedes than just that.

See below for dates. Currently April 15 to April 20.

LENNY KRAVITZ

London	Wembley Arena	Feb 28

KULA SHAKER, OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

Leeds	Academy	Mar 27
Stockton-on-Tees	Globe Theatre	Mar 28
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Mar 29
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Mar 31
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 1
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 3
London	Brixton Academy	Apr 4
Swansea	Arena	Apr 5
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Apr 7
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 8
Bristol	Beacon	Apr 9
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 11
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 13
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 15, 16
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 18
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Apr 19
Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 20

LAIBACH

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 22
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 23
Southampton	1865	Feb 24
Bristol	Trinity Centre	Feb 25

LAZULI

Stourport	Fusion Festival	Aug 7
Bango	Neuadd Ogwen	Aug 8
Dublin	Sound House	Aug 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Aug 11
London	Putney Half Moon	Aug 12
Southampton	1865	Aug 13
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Aug 14
Sudbury	Arts Centre	Aug 16

LEVELLERS COLLECTIVE

Guildford	G Live	Mar 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 7
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Mar 8
York	Barbican	Mar 9
Buxton	Opera House	Mar 11, 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 13
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 14
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 15
Malvern	Theatre	Mar 16
Bath	Forum	Mar 18
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Mar 19
Poole	Lighthouse	Mar 20
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Mar 21
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Mar 22
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Mar 23
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Mar 25

LIMP BIZKIT

Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 8
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 11
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Mar 13
Manchester	AO Arena	Mar 15
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 16
Till Lindemann, Aesthetic Perfection		
London	Arena Wembley Arena	Nov 4

LINDISFARNE

Berwick	Maltings Theatre	Feb 15
Tenbury Wells	The Regal	Feb 22
Tamworth	Assembly Rooms	Feb 23
Carmarthen	Lyric Theatre	Mar 14
Poole	Lighthouse	Apr 5
Whitby	Pavilion	May 25

LINKIN PARK, SPITIBOX, JPEGMAFIA

London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 28

AYNSLEY LISTER

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 28
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jan 29
Tring DEMBE Theatre		Feb 1
Twyford	St Mary's Church	Mar 1
Cardiff	Acapela Studio	May 15

JOHN LODGE

Birmingham	Town Hall	Apr 6
Manchester	RNCM	Apr 8
Glasgow	Pavilion Theatre	Apr 9
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Apr 11
Bristol	St George's Hall	Apr 14
Guildford	G Live	Apr 15

LORDI

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Apr 2
Newcastle	NX	Apr 3
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 5
Glasgow	Galvanizers	Apr 6
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 8
Bristol	SWX	Apr 9

NICK LOWE AND LOS STRAITJACKETS

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Feb 10
Bath	Komedia	Feb 11
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 12
London	Highbury Garage	Feb 13
Glasgow	Pavilion	Feb 16

JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 5
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 9
London	Hyde Park	Jul 13

ERJA LYYTINEN

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 2
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Apr 3
Liverpool	Academy 2	Apr 4
Newcastle	Think Tank	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 6
Glasgow	Nice 'N' Sleazy	Apr 7
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 10
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 11
Sittingbourne	Apple Yard	Apr 12

MAGNUM - A TRIBUTE TO TONY CLARKIN

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jan 21
Manchester	Academy 2	Jan 22
Glasgow	Garage	Jan 24
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jan 25

JESSE MALIN

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 1, 2

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 11, 12
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 18, 19
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Apr 25
Bristol	Beacon	Apr 26

PEROLEHAGEN/GETTY

Manchester	Apollo	May 2, 3
Swansea	Arena	May 9
Swansea	Arena	May 10

DOM MARTIN (UNPLUGGED)

Edinburgh	The Caves Apr 30	
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Rooms	May 2
Manchester	Carole Nash Hall	May 3
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	May 6
London	Putney Half Moon	May 7
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	May 8
Leamington Spa	Temperance	May 9

MARILYN MANSON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Feb 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Feb 22
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Feb 23

MASSIVE WAGONS

Cambridge	Junction	May 15
Newcastle	University	May 16
Leeds	Stylus	May 17
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 18

Recommended

MASTERS OF REALITY

Southampton	1865	Apr 6
Manchester	Rebellion	Apr 7
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Apr 8
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Apr 9

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Jan 17
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Jan 26
Halifax	Grayston University	Jan 30
Lowdon	Village Hall	Feb 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 8
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Feb 20
Tring	Dembe Theatre	Feb 21
Liverpool	Blues Festival	Mar 14
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 22

MIKE + THE MECHANICS

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 3
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Mar 4
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Mar 5
Perth	Concert Hall	Mar 7
Stockton-on-Tees	Globe Theatre	Mar 8
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Mar 9
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 11
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Mar 12
York	Barbican	Mar 14
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Mar 15
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 17
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 18
Halifax	Victoria Halls	Mar 20
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Mar 22
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Mar 23
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Mar 24
Leicester	De Monfort Hall	Mar 26
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Mar 27
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Mar 29
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Mar 30
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Apr 1
Northampton	Derngate	Apr 2
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 4
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Apr 5
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 6
Guildford	G Live	Apr 8
Bristol	Beacon	Apr 10
Swansea	Arena	Apr 11
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 12
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 14

NAPALM DEATH, CROWBAR, FULL OF HELL, BRAT

Dublin	Academy	Mar 4
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 5
Newcastle	University	Mar 6
London	Brixton Electric	Mar 7
Liverpool	Academy	Mar 8
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 9

THE NIGHT FLIGHT ORCHESTRA

London	Highbury Garage	Feb 1

NAZARETH

Dunfermline	Glen Pavilion	Mar 1

OASIS, RICHARD ASHCROFT

Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jul 4, 5
Manchester	Heaton Park	Jul 11, 12, 16, 19, 20
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25-28, 30, Aug 2, 3
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Aug 8, 9, 12
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 16, 17

OPETH, GRAND MAGUS

Bristol	Beacon	Feb 25
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Feb 28
Manchester	Albert Hall	Mar 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 2

PANTERA, POWER TRIP

Glasgow	Hydro	Feb 18
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Feb 19
Dublin	3 Arena	Feb 21
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Feb 23
London	Wembley Arena	Feb 25

PAPA ROACH, WAGE WAR

London	Wembley Arena	Feb 7
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 8
Liverpool	M&S Arena	Feb 9

PARKWAY DRIVE

London	Wembley Arena	Oct 4
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 6

JIZZY PEARL'S LOVE/HATE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 5
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 6
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 8
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 12
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 13
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell	Mar 14
Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 15
Swansea	Hangar 18	Mar 16

PIXIES

Aberdeen	P&J Arena	May 13
Edinburgh	Academy	May 14
London	Brixton Academy	May 16, 17
Leeds	Academy	May 19
Birmingham	Academy	May 20
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	May 21
Newcastle	City Hall	May 23
Manchester	Apollo	May 24

BEN POOLE

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Jan 8

IGGY POP

London	Alexndra Palace	May 28
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	May 31
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 3

PRIMAL SCREAM

Bristol	Beacon	Mar 31
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 1
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Apr 3
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 4, 5
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 7
Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 8
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 10
Manchester	Aviva Studios	Apr 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 12
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Apr 14
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Apr 15
Leeds	Academy	Apr 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 19

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD

Bristol	Academy	May 22
Ware	Stone Valley Festival	May 23
Bournemouth	Academy	May 24
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	May 29
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	May 30
Norwich	Epic Studios	May 31
Dublin	Olympia	Jun 1
Limerick	Dolan's Warehouse	Jun 13
Cardiff	Depot	Jun 14
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Jun 26
Newark	Stone Valley Festival	Jun 27
Oxford	Academy	Jun 28
Leicester	Academy	Jul 3
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jul 4
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Jul 5
Sheffield	Leadmill	Jul 30
Northampton	Roadmender	Jul 31
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Aug 1
Blackpool	Rebellion Festival	Aug 7
Durham	Stone Valley Festival	Aug 8
Coventry	Empire	Aug 9
Cork City	Hall	Aug 15
Belfast	Putting The Fast In Belfast	Aug 16

QUEENSRŸCHE, NIGHT DEMON

Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 11
Birmingham	XOYO	Feb 12
Bristol	Marble Factory	Feb 14
London	Brixton Electric	Feb 15

RAGING SPEEDHORN, KILL THE LIGHTS

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Mar 7
Manchester	Rebellion	Mar 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 9
Glasgow	Cathouse	Mar 10
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Mar 12
Dublin	Grand Social	Mar 13
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 14
Nottingham	Old Cold Store	Mar 15

STEVEN WILSON

He might not match the guys on the opposite page for spectacle, but musically prog's renaissance man is a class act.

See next page for dates. Currently May 9 to May 18.

Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 16
Exeter	The Cavern	Mar 17
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Mar 18
Herne Bay	Kings Hall	Mar 20
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 21
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 22
Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 23

TROY REDFERN

Leamington Spa	ance	Mar 1
Blackpool	Love Live Festival	Mar 2
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 3
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 4
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Mar 5
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	May 1
Stockton-on-Tees	Blues At The Bay	May 2
Doncaster	The Leopard	May 3
Derby	Flowerpot	May 8
Birmingham	Joe Joe Jims	May 9
Hastings	The Carlisle	May 16
Sheffield	The Greystones	May 18
New Milton	Forest Arts Centre	May 22
Aldershot	West End Centre	May 23
Winchester	The Arc	May 24
Worthing	Factory	May 25
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	May 26
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 27

THE REZILLOS

Bristol	Thekla	Feb 1
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 7
Sheffield	Leadmill	Feb 8
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 15
Birmingham	The Crossing	Feb 28
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 1
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Mar 21
London	Gr Portland St 229 Club	Mar 22
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Mar 29

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jan 25
Wakefield	Venue 23	Feb 23
London	Highbury Garage	Mar 28
Hastings	The Carlisle	Mar 30

RONNIE ROMERO

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 6
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 7
Oldham	Whittles	Mar 8
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 11
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 12
Great Yarmouth	HRH Fest Spring Break	Mar 13

SAXON, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 4
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 5
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
Sheffield	Octagon	Nov 8
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 9
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 11
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 13
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 16

THE ZAC SCHULZE GANG

London	Highbury The Grace	Apr 4
Leeds	Belgrave	Apr 5
Manchester	Gullivers	Apr 6
Newcastle	Cluny 2	Apr 8
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Apr 9
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 13
Brighton	Prince Albert	Apr 14
Bristol	Louisiana	Apr 16

SHAMAN'S HARVEST, BLACKTOP MOJO

Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 5
Southampton	1865	Mar 6
London	Islington Academy	Mar 7
Birmingham	Institute 2	Mar 8
Manchester	Rebellion	Mar 12
Glasgow	Cathouse	Mar 13
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Mar 14
Belfast	Limelight 2	Mar 19
Dublin	Academy	Mar 20
Cork	Cyprus Avenue	Mar 21
Swansea	Sin City	Mar 22
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 26
Derby	Hairy Dog	Mar 27
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 28
Brighton	The Arch	Mar 29

THE SISTERS OF MERCY

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 25, 26

SKUNK ANANSIE

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 28, 29
Cardiff	University	Mar 31
Bristol	Beacon	Apr 1
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 3
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 4
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 5
Norwich	LCR	Apr 7
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 8
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 10
Newcastle	NX	Apr 11
Leeds	Academy	Apr 12
Bournemouth	Academy	Apr 14
Brighton	Dome	Apr 15
Guildford	G Live	Apr 16

SOCIAL DISTORTION

Manchester	Albert Hall	Apr 25
London	Sheperd's Bush Empire	Apr 26

SON OF MAN, THE MIGHTY RA

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Aug 9

SONS OF LIBERTY

Trecco Bay	Winter's End Festival	Jan 31
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Feb 28
St Austell	Band Club	Mar 1
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Mar 13
Hastings	The Carlisle	Mar 14
Northampton	Black Price	Mar 15
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 28
Glasgow	HMV	Mar 29
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 30
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Apr 25
Swansea	Hangar 18	Apr 26
Bristol	The Exchange	Apr 27
Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Leicester	Musician 2	May 10

SONS OF SALEM

Bristol	Thekla	Mar 27

PAUL BERGEN/GETTY

LIVE!

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 28
Leeds	Key Club	Mar 29
Newcastle	Anarchy	Mar 30
Glasgow	Cathouse	Apr 1
Manchester	Club Academy	Apr 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 3
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 4

SOUL ASYLUM

Bristol	The Fleece	Jan 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 28
Glasgow	Garage	Jan 29
London	Camden Dingwalls	Jan 31

STEREOPHONICS

Belfast	Belsonic	Jun 5
Dublin	St Anne's Park	Jun 6
Cork	Virgin Media Park	Jun 7
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 14
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 28
London	Finsbury Park	Jul 4
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jul 11, 12

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS

Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 12
Manchester	Academy	Mar 14
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 15
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
York	Barbican	Mar 18
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 20
Bristol	Academy	Mar 21
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 22

SUPERGRASS

Glasgow	Barrowland	May 8
Nottingham	Rock City	May 10
Sheffield	Octagon	May 12
Newcastle	NX	May 13
Birmingham	Academy	May 14
Manchester	Albert Hall	May 16
Cardiff	University Great Hall	May 18
Leeds	Academy	May 20
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 22

SWEET

Cardiff	Tramshed	Apr 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 5

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Bristol	Trinity Centre	Mar 17
London	Camden Koko	Mar 18
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 20
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 21
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 9

TERRORVISION, SCARLET REBELS

Sheffield	Corporation	Mar 6
Chester	Live Rooms	Mar 7
Leicester	Academy	Mar 8
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 20
Margate	Dreamland	Mar 21
Oxford	Academy	Mar 22
Hull	The Welly	Mar 23

TESSERACT

Brighton	Chalk	Feb 11
Cambridge	Junction	Feb 12
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 14
Leeds	Project House	Feb 15

THUNDER MOTHER, COBRA SPELL, VULVARINE

London	Highbury Garage	Feb 11
Manchester	Rebellion	Feb 12

TOTO, CHRISTOPHER CROSS

Glasgow	Hydro	Feb 1
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Feb 2
Manchester	AO Arena	Feb 4
London	Wembley Arena	Feb 5

TREMONTI

Bristol	Academy	Feb 5
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Feb 6
Belfast	Limelight	Feb 7
Dublin	Academy	Feb 9
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 11
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 14

WALTER TROUT

Warwick	Arts Centre	May 6
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 7
Southampton	1865	May 8
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 9
Cambridge	Junction	May 10
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 11

ROBIN TROWER

Buxton	Opera House	May 14
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 15
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 17
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 18
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	May 21

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Winchester	The Arc	Mar 6
New Milton	Forest Arts Centre	Mar 7
Aldershot	West End Centre	Mar 8
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Mar 9
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Mar 13
Tavistock	The Wharf	Mar 15
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Mar 16
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Mar 20
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Mar 21
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 25
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 26
Glasgow	The Ferry	Mar 27
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 28
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Mar 29
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 4
Sheffield	The Greystones	Apr 5

TYGERS OF PAN TANG

Hastings	The Carlisle	Apr 10
Worthing	The Factory	Apr 11
Newport	The Patriot	Apr 12
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Apr 13

BONNIE TYLER

London	Indig02	Jul 25

URIAH HEEP, APRIL WINE, TYKETTO

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Feb 19
Bristol	Beacon	Feb 20
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Feb 22
Glasgow	King's Theatre	Feb 23
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Feb 25
London	Palladium	Feb 26
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Feb 27

ADRIAN VANDENBERG

Glasgow	Classic Grand	May 6
Belfast	Empire	May 7
Dublin	Whelan's	May 8
Sheffield	Corporation	May 9
Buckley	Tivoli	May 10
Newcastle	Riverside	May 11
Manchester	Rebellion	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
London	Camden Underworld	May 15
Crumlin	The Patriot	May 16

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Mar 9
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 24
Lincoln	The Drill	Mar 25

WILL WILDE

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 4
Hastings	The Carlisle	Mar 21

THE WILDHEARTS, JIM JONES ALL STARS, DIRT BOX DISCO

Sheffield	Leadmill	Mar 7
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 8
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 9
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 11
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 15
Southampton	1865	Mar 16

STEVEN WILSON

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 9
Bristol	Beacon	May 10
London	Palladium	May 12, 13, 19, 20
Newcastle	City Hall	May 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 16
Salford	The Lowry	May 18

YOU ME AT SIX, KID KAPICHI

Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 14
Southampton	Guildhall	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 17, 18
Newcastle	NX	Mar 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 21
Leeds	Academy	Mar 26
Manchester	Academy	Mar 29
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 31
London	Wembley Arena	Apr 4

Festivals

2000 TREES
COHEED AND CAMBRIA, ALEXISONFIRE, TAKING BACK SUNDAY, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 9-12

ALFORD ROCK & BLUES
WHEN RIVERS MEET, BRAVE RIVAL, NIVE BELOW ZERO, MORE

Alford (Surrey)	Springbok Estate	Jul 3-6

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BEARDED THEORY FESTIVAL

Iggy Pop, Manic Street Preachers (pictured) and The Sisters Of Mercy head up an appealingly broad-bill bash in the Midlands.

Derbyshire	Catton Park	May 21-25

BEARDED THEORY
IGGY POP, MANIC STREET PREACHERS, THE SISTERS OF MERCY, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	May 21-25

BEL-OAR ROCKS
MICHAEL MONROE, FM, CRASHDIET, MORE

Belfast	Mandela Hall	May 23-25

Recommended

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MACHINE HEAD, MASTODON, TRIVIUM, GOJIRA, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 7-10

CORNWALL ROCKS
FM, TROY REDFERN, GRAHAM OLIVER'S ARMY, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Resort	Oct 3-5

COUNTRY 2 COUNTRY
LAINEY WILSON, DIERKS BENTLEY, CODY JOHNSON, MORE

London	02 Arena	Mar 24-16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 24-16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Mar 24-16

DEMENTIA AWARE FEST
BLACK LAKES, THE BLACK HOUNDS, SKAM, MORE

Cannock	The Station	Jan 18

DESERTFEST
EARTH, ZEAL & ARDOR, PALLBEARER, MORE

London	Camden various venues	May 16-28

DOWNLOAD
GREEN DAY, KORN, SLEEP TOKEN, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 13-15

FIREVOLT
QUIREBOYS, VON HERTZEN BROTHERS, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 7-10

FOREVER NOW
KRAFTWERK, DEATH CULT, THE DAMNED, PIL, MORE

Milton Keynes	Bowl	Jun 22

FUSION
VON HERTZEN BROTHERS, SOLSTICE, LAZULI

Stourport	Civic	Mar 7-9

HAMMERDOWN FESTIVAL
TYGERS OF PAN TANG, DEMON, ONE LAST DAY, MORE

Brighton	Chalk	Jul 19, 20

LEEDS BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
THESE WICKED RIVERS, GRAINE DUFFY, JON AMOR

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 23

LOVE LIVE
FM, NAZARETH, PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Feb 28-Mar 2

MAID OF STONE
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, BLACK STONE CHERRY, SWEET, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 18-20

MAYOR'S FEST
MASSIVE WAGONS, VIRGINMARYS, THE KARMA EFFECT, MORE

Milton Keynes	Giffard Arms	Apr 4, 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 5

NORTHERN KIN
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, MIDGE URE, UNDERTONES, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall	Aug 1-3

PROG FOR PEART
AMAROK, KALLE WALLNER, COMEDY OF ERRORS, MORE

Abingdon	The Northcourt	Jul 18, 19

RADAR
CARPENTER BRUT, ZEAL & ARDOR, NORMANDIE, MORE

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 4-6

REBELLION
THE DAMNED, HUGH CORNWELL, DOA, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 7-10

ROCKERS REUNITED BLUES FESTIVAL
BRAVE RIVAL, CHANTEL McGREGOR, TOM KILLNER, MORE

Liverpool	Adelphi Hotel	Mar 14-16

STEELHOUSE
W.A.S.P., WILDHEARTS, LITA FORD, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 25-27

STOCKTON ON TEES BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
SUGARAY RAYFORD, CONNOLLY HAYES, BEN POOLE, MORE

Stockton on Tees	Arc	May 10

STONEDEAD
THE ALMIGHTY, THE DEAD DAISIES, SWEET, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 23

UK BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
ARTHUR BROWN, KING KING, CHANTEL McGREGOR, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Jan 31-Feb 2

WILDFIRE
BLACK SPIDERS, AUSTIN GOLD, BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE, MORE

Lanarkshire	Wiston Lodge	Jun 27-29

WINTER'S END
ARENA, WOBBLER, ANTIMATTER, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Apr 24-27

KATJA OGRIN/GETTY

"Who put sugar in my tea?!" Ian Gillan returns to the stage after yet another Don Airey solo.

'Purple are still the greatest hard rock band of their vintage extant.'

Simon McBride (top) lets rip on a solo, Roger Glover locks into a deep groove or two.

Deep Purple / Reef

London O2 Arena

Two generations of classic rock royalty reliably deliver the goods.

Can it really be three decades since likeably loose-assed Glastonbury four-piece Reef fronted a TV ad campaign to alert us all to the myriad benefits of the digital format of the future, the Sony Minidisc? Apparently so. But as this snapshot from history cautions us, not everything turns out quite as one might expect. Back in '95, when Reef were poster boys for a thing called Britrock (due to its handy concurrence with Britpop) and having hefty *TOTP*-bothering hits, you'd have been forgiven for thinking that by now they'd be comfortably filling O2s of their own. They even had a proper No.1 album (back in a day when physical formats were still a thing). Yet here they are, happily opening for the Purps, and respectfully thanking people for listening.

Reef remain a big-hearted and reliable proposition. There are only two of their original number left: the still rangy, Paul-Rodgers-on-steroids vocalist Gary Stringer (who seems to be drifting perilously Axl Rosewards as his vocal chords gradually succumb to a lifetime of muscular flaying), and blissed-out surf-bum-turned-Gandalf bassist Jack Bessant. With swing-literate drummer Luke Bullen and newbie guitarist Amy Newton neatly despatching *Naked* and *Place Your Hands*' familiar riffs, Reef please a relatively tough crowd who are eventually compelled to dutifully clap along to the *Top Gear* coda of the quartet's unexpected closing assault on Fleetwood Mac's *The Chain*.

Deep Purple's boots are as firmly rooted in the present as they are in the past. Yes, we're treated to no less than five selections from 1972 (*Machine Head*'s *Highway Star* – is there a more exhilarating opener in rock? Probably not. *Lazy, Space Truckin'*, inevitable set closer *Smoke On The Water*, and *When A Blind Man Cries*, a song originally consigned to B-side ignominy which has since grown in stature to become a live favourite thanks to Ian Gillan's invariably impassioned delivery), but the Purps are no mere heritage act. Tonight's set is peppered with six songs from 2024's entirely excellent *=1* album, their first with guitarist Simon McBride, who more than holds his own throughout the career-encapsulating proceedings.

If there is one criticism that has to be levelled at today's (where are we now, Mark IX?) Purple, it has to be their dogged adherence to the dreaded solo spot, an intrinsically 70s hangover that only serves to hobble their set's forward momentum. McBride's guitar solo arrives bafflingly early, wherein he extemporises and shreds as if his life depends on it, to no obvious point and purpose for some significant time at the close of *In Rock*'s *Into The Fire*. But patience is ultimately pushed to its limit by two Don Airey solo spots. One used to be a big ask, but two? An expansive *Lazy* intro is surplus to requirements, but a second Emerson-styled 'improvisation' on popular classics that concludes with a Prom-styled *Land Of Hope And Glory* with its lyrics projected on the back screen is an ill-judged and outmoded indulgence too far.

Roger Glover and Ian Paice feel no similar need to validate themselves, the intro to *Space Truckin'* where they lock its riff into the ultimate groove offers more than enough evidence as to their technical brilliance. Which is a relief, for while a romp through *The Mule* might not actually kill today's Ian Paice, it might well finish me off. Perhaps next time they should cut the anachronistic flannel and fill the space with *Speed King* and *Fireball*. That said, they're still the greatest hard rock band of their vintage extant, and well, I guess something's got to be happening on stage while Ian Gillan steps off for a cup of tea.

Ian Fortnam

KEV NIXON

Amyl And The Sniffers

London Roundhouse

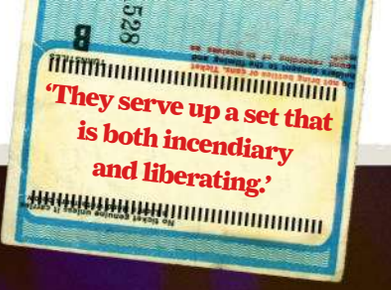
Aussie punk rockers bring the party to the capital.

The world may be on the brink of falling apart, but life in Amyl And The Sniffers is looking pretty bloody good right now. With a Top 10 album already stashed in their cool box and their biggest UK show to date coming to London later this year, the Aussie pub/punk rockers can have no complaints about their current trajectory.

Led by firecracking frontwoman Amy Taylor, tonight feels like a rowdy celebration as the four-piece serve up a bulldozing set that is both incendiary and liberating. For the most part they plunge into their new album *Cartoon Darkness*, spicing up the mosh pit accordingly with the filthy *Jerkin'* and throttling *Motorbike Song*. But it's their last record (*Comfort To Me*) that really ignites the crowd surfers as *Freaks To The Front*, *Security* and *Guided By Angels* come on like relentless heavy blows. Taylor's marauding stage presence, which sees her charging down the photographers' pit, mounting speaker stacks, and even doing press-ups at one point – is complemented by Declan Mehrtens's squalling guitar riffs and Gus Romer's sledgehammering bass lines, particularly on the spiky *U Should Not Be Doing That*. When she gives Donald Trump both barrels ahead of *Tiny Bikini*, for a split second the world doesn't seem so bad after all.

Damian Jones

Amyl's firecracking frontwoman Amy Taylor.



The Zombies

Begin Here Festival, Harpenden

Bittersweet farewell from soft-prog pioneers.

Being Here's three-day celebration of all things Zombie culminates in a heartwarming Saturday night performance by today's Colin Blunstone-fronted incarnation of the band, paying tribute, alongside friends and family, to absent keyboard player Rod Argent, who retired from touring following a stroke last July.

As well as cherry-picking the best from 1968's classic *Odessey And Oracle*, the set also includes the brooding title song from latest album *Different Game*, dispelling any insinuation of mere mid-60s flash in the pan. Solo offerings from newer members, and special guest Russ Ballard (of Argent and Roulettes fame), add fresh textures to the performance, with pianist Milly Riquelme's rhapsodic transcription of *Fiesta*, from Argent's *Classically Speaking* collection, particularly coming up trumps.

Signature hits are received with unbounded enthusiasm, most noticeably when Hugh Grundy lays down the iconic loping beat of *Time Of The Season*. Ex-bassist Chris White delivers a shaky but stirring rendition of *Butcher's Tale*, emblematic of his and Argent's legacy as songwriters of distinction. The show, originally billed as the final Zombies concert, fittingly concludes with *She's Not There*, the song that first catapulted them to fame now serving as a nostalgic farewell.

Millen Brown-Ewens

Marcus King

London Hammersmith Apollo

The guitarslinger from South Carolina continues his ascent.

While recording his latest solo album with celebrated producer Rick Rubin, American guitarist, singer and songwriter Marcus King grappled with addiction and dark thoughts that threatened to end not only his career but also his life. The result was the aptly titled *Mood Swings*, a beautiful, soulful collection that sidestepped King's usual mix of Southern-fried rock, blues and barroom boogie, soothing a path to recovery.

Tonight's show is in two halves, with new songs such as *Fuck My Life Up Again, Bipolar Love* and *Mood Swings* itself featuring heavily in a flavoursome first course. Returning after the interval, King manages to hold the audience's attention while strumming no less than six unplugged songs, and the show's run-in wallows in adulation of classic material by Robert Johnson, Led Zeppelin, the Jeff Beck Group, Pink Floyd and Neil Young, before King signs off with the self-written encore *Wallflowers & Wine* that segues into the Allman Brothers great *Ramblin' Man*.

Don't get bogged down by the fact that the material isn't all his own. There's plenty of evidence to propose King as a formidable talent at the mic and also with a guitar, and, having graduated from the Electric Ballroom to the Forum and now Hammersmith, he seems destined to follow Joe Bonamassa's path into mainstream acceptance.

Dave Ling

Big Country

Glasgow SWG3

The Celtic warhorse thunders on undaunted.

2024 was a year of upheaval for Big Country. Three members, including original drummer Mark Brzezicki, jumped ship in quick succession, leaving guitarist Bruce Watson as the sole remaining founder member. With their new singer Tommie Paxton having been plucked from a Big Country tribute band, what we have now is essentially the Bruce Watson band performing the music of Big Country. And it works.

Despite having been together for a mere matter of months, they're tight, fiery and clearly having a blast. The current set consists of their 40-year-old album *Steeltown* played in its entirety, plus all the greatest hits. Ever since the tragic passing of charismatic singer/guitarist/leader Stuart Adamson in 2001, Big Country have been, to all intents and purposes, a nostalgia act. There's no shame in that, as their unique form of Scottish heartland rock – Springsteen and Lynott-meet-post-punk at a Ceilidh – is worth celebrating. An underrated guitarist, Watson at times sounds like an electrified Neil Young, and The Edge when he had one. Against all odds, this isn't a band in disarray. They sound re-energised. Desperation can work wonders. You'd hope that Adamson – who is mentioned fondly throughout the show – would approve. His music is being treated with the respect it deserves.

Paul Whitelaw

LOUISE PHILLIPS

Michael Monroe

London Electric Ballroom

Unfinished business settled and then some.

★ Forty years ago Hanoi Rocks delivered their Bob Ezrin-produced *Two Steps From The Move* LP, a ragged-arsed, intoxicant-laced, post-Faces/Mott/Alice glam classic. If they'd toured it as intended, they'd have bestrode the 80s like pissed-up, leather-kecked, superfluous-scarfed, cosmetic-caked colossus and there'd have been no need for GN'R. But high-kicking fawn-in-headlights vocalist Michael Monroe injured himself on stage, and while waiting for him to heal, drummer Razzle went for a drive with a tipsy Vince Neil and died.

Here we are (almost four decades to the day since Hanoi failed to land at the Marquee to favour London with their masterpiece) to finally witness MM and original Hanoi bassist Sami Yaffa knock out their *Two Steps* magnum opus in full. And to say it's brilliant is only to understate the full triumphal, emotional impact of both material and performance. Ex-Doll Steve Conte gives good McCoy, Rich Jones charms with his take on Razzle's spoken-word asides... Monroe? He's everywhere at once, swapping hats and can-canning in the face of the aging process. The album's delivered with aplomb prior to a rousing second set of solo classics, and yet more Hanoi (*Motorvatin', Malibu Beach*).

Days later, Monroe injures himself onstage and Finnish gigs are postponed. Resting band members are strongly advised to refuse lifts from strangers.

Ian Fortnam

Michael Monroe: seemingly defying the aging process.

Anthrax / Kreator / Testament

Wolverhampton Civic Hall

Thrash titans tangle with time.

★ Thrash remains the bedrock of modern metal. It's also still a massive draw, and 3,000-plus fans are in the venue for the first act of a thrash triple threat. Flames fly as Testament thunder through the likes of *Native Blood, Electric Crown* and *Into The Pit*. Although there's a brief respite with *Dark Roots Of Earth*'s epic doom, it isn't long before they're back firing at Gatling-gun pace.

Somehow it gets faster from there. Kreator may well be the best 80s thrashers live these days, their mixture of theatricality, high-speed riffs and anthems making them a ferocious proposition. Bodies fly over the barriers to *Betrayer*, while *Phobia* gets the first major snarl-along of the night. Flanked by inflatable devils and with flaming torch-wielding monks popping up throughout their set, you don't need to hear *Satan Is Real* to know which side of the ecclesiastical divide the band fall.

Although not as flashy, Anthrax are buoyed by the sheer universality of their songs. There's no contending with *Metal Thrashing Mad, Caught In A Mosh* or *Madhouse*, and even their covers – *Antisocial* and *Got The Time* – have anthem status by this point, setting up a no-frills, all-thrills set that has singer Joey Belladonna bounding around the stage and even leaping from a platform to wind back the clocks one more time.

Rich Hobson

LORNE THOMSON/GETTY

IDLES

London Alexandra Palace

Bleak but at times joyous display from Bristol's finest.

★ IDLES are not known for front-loading their shows with fiery crowd pleasing bangers, and tonight is no exception. If anything the set-list shows just how visceral and dark the Bristol band can go. They open with the deceptively slow *Idea 01* before frontman Joe Talbot whips up the audience for *Colossus* and the stomping *Gift Horse*. But the middle section veers into territory so gnarly at times, you're half expecting a chainsaw to rip through the middle of the stage. The screeching, stabbing guitar riffs Mark Bowen and Lee Kiernan throttle through on the likes of *Car Crash* and *Divide & Conquer* could soundtrack a horror film, they're that brutal. Even the saxophonist, Colin Webster, sounds like he's blowing nails into the walls, such is the noise coming from his instrument.

When IDLES eventually do get to those remaining incendiary bangers, boy are they worth the wait. *Samaritans, Never Fight A Man With A Perm, Dancer* and *Danny Nedelko* have never sounded so joyous and celebratory as circle pits open up in the audience.

Like most of their shows, calls for peace in Gaza, gratitude towards immigrants and Tory tongue lashings remain at the forefront. But tonight it's IDLES' music that speaks volumes, no matter how dark it delves.

Damian Jones

The Wildhearts

Tunbridge Wells Forum

Ginger's tribute to The Wildhearts adds... The Wildhearts!

★ Technically speaking, tonight isn't a Wildhearts show per se, having begun as part of Ginger's unplugged celebration of the group he formed in 1989. However, somewhere along the way it became a full-band show in the original acoustic format. What an early Christmas present.

Ginger's mental health issues have been well documented, but with an all-new Wildhearts line-up rendered newer still by the arrival of drummer Charles Evans and a fresh studio record, *Satanic Rites Of The Wildhearts*, due in the spring, the Geordie appears happy, chatty and as enthusiastic as he's ever been. Special guest Carol Hodge returns to add keyboard colour, and lively banter ricochets back and forth between musicians and a boisterous Saturday-night audience, with many a joyous singalong.

The set pools old and new, near-hits and deep cuts. *The Miles Away Girl* segues into John Travolta & Olivia Newton John's *Summer Nights*. *Caffeine Bomb* adds a nifty a capella moment. Throughout, Ginger's faithful border collie Maggie sits at his feet. If she wasn't here, the chances are Ginger wouldn't be either. Initially her barking presents a minor irritation, but gradually she settles, and when we shout out her name, she answers with a 'Woooff!'

Nights such as this are good for the soul.

Dave Ling

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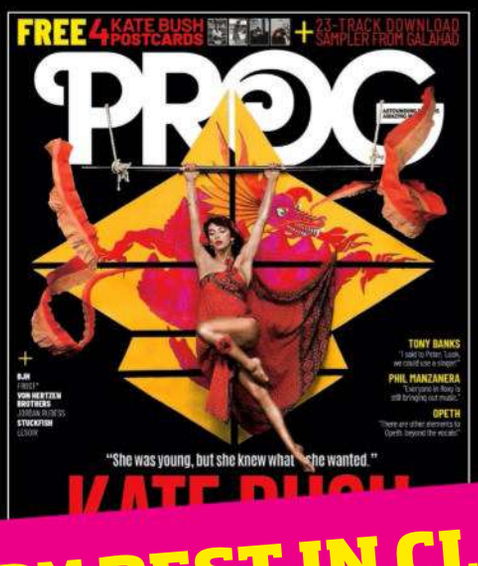
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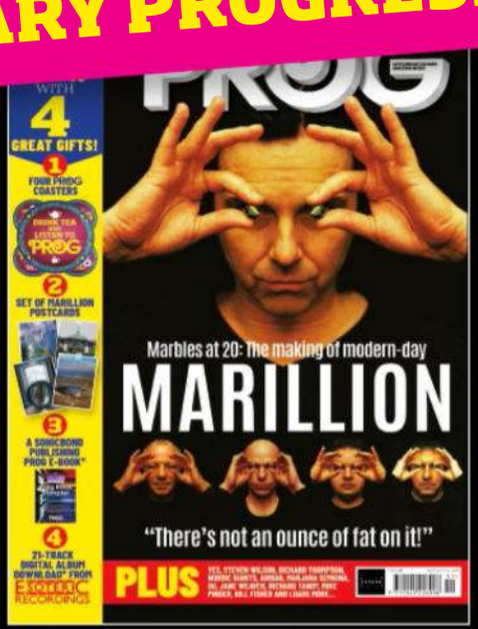
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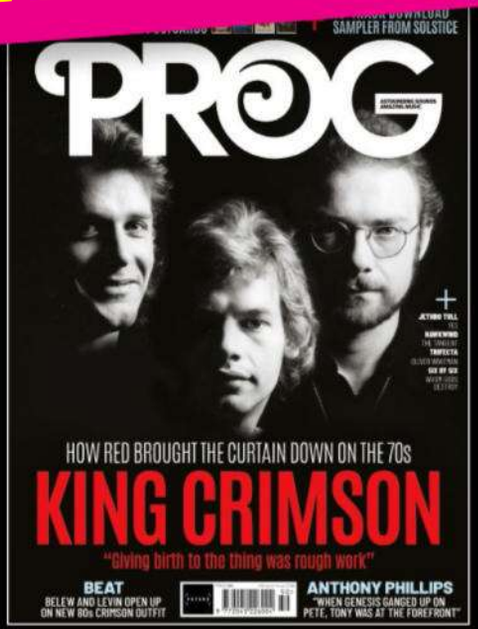
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Suzi Quatro

London Palladium

God save the Queen!

★ As Suzi Q takes to the stage of this most prestigious of old-school showbusiness venues and launches into an ebullient opening romp through a trio of signature 70s stormers (*The Wild One, I May Be Too Young, Daytona Demon*), there is something about the entire affair's overall ambience that suggests that at any moment Basil Brush will fetch up to compere the remainder of the evening with Roy North. Tragically, this doesn't occur, but it says much for today's Suzi Quatro that, at 76, she can still evoke such distinct memories of a Chinnichap glam-rock heyday a good half century behind her.

Obviously, nobody expects her to fearlessly carry off a figure-hugging black leather catsuit while she's at it, but that's what's happening. As are storming assaults on *48 Crash, Tear Me Apart* and *Can The Can*. Of course, La Quatro's also a little bit country (as *Stumblin' In* and *If You Can't Give Me Love* ably demonstrate), but as heavier material of a more recent vintage (*The Devil In Me, Motor City Riders*) proves, she's certainly no mere heritage turn. Forewarned of an extensive 'bass solo', we prepare for the worst, but incredibly it proves to be the show's zenith, a stunning display of incendiary bottom-end virtuosity. Topped off with its triumphal *Devil Gate Drive* boom-boom, this is Suzi's '68 Special and Las Vegas pinnacle combined.

Ian Fortnam

"Incredibly, a bass solo proves to be the show's zenith."

Suzi Quatro: still *Canning The Can* and *Devil Gate Drive*-ing at 76. (Basil Brush just out of shot.)

LORNE THOMSON/GETTY

Sepultura / Jinjer / Obituary

London Hammersmith Apollo

A fond, sold-out farewell to Brazil's finest metal export.

★ Hard to understand why Jinjer are above Obituary on tonight's bill. That the Ukrainians are extreme metal darlings du jour is undeniable, but on a night like this, with the much-loved headliners bowing out amid a veritable sea of denim and leather-clad headbangers, meat and potatoes will always win over haute cuisine, and from the roar of *Redneck Stomp* to the title song of the American band's genre-defining 1989 debut *Slowly We Rot*, it's Obituary that the audience really, really wants.

Wrapping up their career after four decades, Sepultura electrify the mood of sentimentality, beginning with two all-time bangers, *Refuse/Resist* and *Territory*. Max and Iggor Cavalera aren't here, of course, but long-serving frontman Derrick Green, guitarist Andreas Kisser and bassist Paulo Jr have all bled for the Sepultura cause, and while the almost two-hour set dips on occasion, the thunderous highs – including *Slave New World*, the ecologically-aware *Guardians Of The Earth*, *Choke*, *Inner Self* and a cover of Motörhead's *Orgasmatron* – all shake the building. And when Sepultura tap into their Brazilian heritage for *Kaiowas* (during which musicians, guests and even fans pound out rhythms on drums placed front of stage), *Ratamahatta* and a blistering finale of *Roots Bloody Roots*, the group's originality really shines through.

Dave Ling

Tropical Fuck Storm

London Scala

It's a great name.

★ You know what to expect from a band called Tropical Fuck Storm: incendiary live performances, guitars clashing, howling and wailing frustration, noise building and biting, figures whirling round the stage as if demented, melodies and feedback wrenched out of amplifiers in equal proportion. Excitement. Moshing. Affirmation that you're not fucking dead yet.

Tropical Fuck Storm have long been one of Melbourne's greatest secrets. Built round the sardonic, mischievous figure of Gareth Liddiard (ex-The Drones), flanked by Fiona Kitschin (also ex-Drones) and Eric Dunn, they snarl out defiance and charisma, backed by a drummer who thunders dismay. Rock stars, like you dream of. No, not the ones on YouTube but real and mighty.

Tropical Fuck Storm are intense, bruising, inspirational. Every song feels vital, like being born anew; songs such as (Stooges cover) *Ann*, (Black Sabbath cover) *Black Sabbath* and the mighty, churning, accusatory *You Let My Tyres Down*.

I was prepared for them to be incendiary, but I wasn't prepared for the deluge of emotion that sweeps me, causing my body to rack with sobs as they launched into opener *Braindrops*. Every moment we spend there, we are wrestled ever further away from the everyday, the mundane, into the extraordinary. True stars.

Everett True

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds

Dublin 3Arena

A triumphant St Nick.

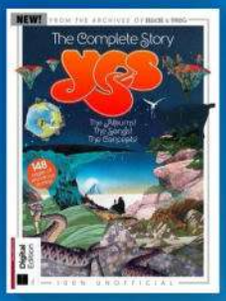
★ The adoring throng are in reverent awe from the off, like a multitude of snakes held fast by the charmer's art. Cave leaps from behind the piano he alternates between caressing and pounding to touch the hands at the lip of a stage that could barely hold him, and on occasion lets himself fall into the outstretched arms.

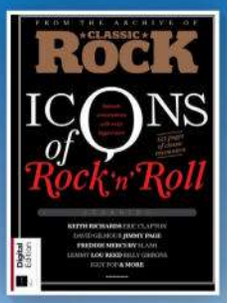
Mercurial foil Warren Ellis, who resembles a groovier Karl Marx when caught in black and white on the big screen, swings a violin through the air when he isn't coaxing sounds from a keyboard that looks like something rescued from a skip. He and the other Bad Seeds, including deputising Radiohead bassist Colin Greenwood, play as if driven by some elemental force.

Together they deliver every song bar one from this year's *Wild God* as joyous hymns to love's enduring power, despite Cave being put through life's wringer over the past several years. And what makes this possibly the gig of the year is the triple whammy of *Red Right Hand* (a song many were introduced to via *Peaky Blinders*) with the audience gleefully singing along to celebrate John Milton's fallen angel, an equally malevolent *The Mercy Seat*, and a devastatingly euphoric *White Elephant*. During the latter, Cave's quartet of backing singers join him at the front and transform the arena into a gospel revival tent. Phenomenal.

Pat Carty

Celebrate the songs and sounds of the greatest decades in music





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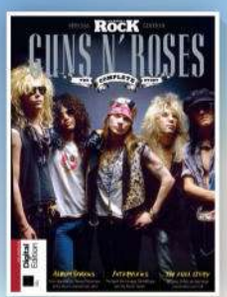
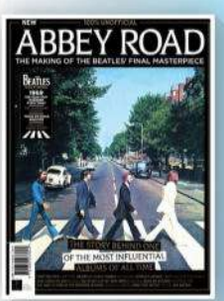
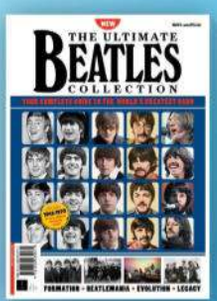
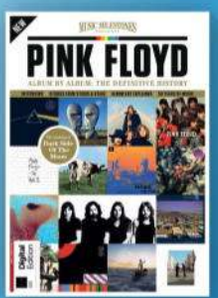


Crank up the volume and get to know the best rock and metal bands on the planet







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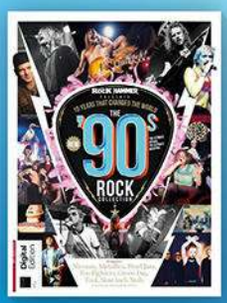

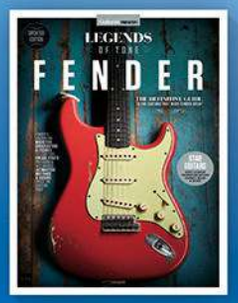

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The Soundtrack Of My Life

The Struts frontman **Luke Spiller** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Dave Everley**

It's a bright morning in LA when Luke Spiller appears on Zoom. "Life's pretty good," he says cheerfully, tousling his morning thatch. The Struts frontman has come a long way since growing up in a religious family in England's West Country, and he's got the musical memories to prove it. "I even made a list," he says proudly, "so I don't forget anything."

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

It was Stevie Wonder, *I Just Called To Say I Love You*. My dad is a gospel singer-songwriter – like a preacher – and I remember travelling to various Christian camps when I was a little kid and this being on. I have vivid memories of wearing typical little-kid clothes and hearing this.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

It was *Song Of The King (Seven Fat Cows)* from *Joseph And His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which is sung by Pharoah. He's pretty much Elvis Presley, and it's a rock'n'roll song. I was picked to play him at school. It was significant for me because once it ended, the audience applauded. I thought: "Wow, I can do this." I'll pull it out now and again and it'll take me back to figuring out my moves in my bedroom.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

I could have said so many things, like [Meat Loaf's] *Bat Out Of Hell* or [Queen's] *A Day At The Races*, but for me it's David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*. It's one of those records you have to listen to from beginning to end, and have an experience with it. It's the perfect combination of words and music, but also what was going on culturally at the time – this fascination with all things space and sci-fi. He captured that perfectly.

THE BEST LIVE ALBUM

Queen, *Live Killers*. I loved the way they managed to take these complex studio recordings and make them work live.

THE SINGER

Shirley Bassey. For me she's the quintessential siren. Talk about absolute raw talent and deliver. When I hear her voice it literally sends shivers down my spine. People compliment me on being a singer, and I have no problem with that [laughs]. But when I hear her, I'm, like: "No, *that*'s a real singer."

THE SONGWRITER

Jim Steinman. Whether it's Meat Loaf or Bonnie Tyler or Celine Dion, when you hear those singers you can feel his personality. He has a style that is totally his own. I adore his solo album, *Bad For Good*, but the only thing that lets it down very slightly is Jim's voice. So during lockdown I had this mad idea of getting the tapes for the album, digitising them and then singing over the album. I actually wrote a letter to Jim Steinman before he died explaining what I wanted to do, and he said yes.

THE GUITAR HERO

I have to go with Brian May. His playing isn't only highly original, but kind of flawless, and he's an incredible songwriter on top of that.

MY CULT HERO

Scott Walker, hands down. I was dating a French girl who introduced me to [Belgian singer] Jacques Brel, and through that I discovered Scott Walker's English version of Brel's music, which led to Scott's 60s solo albums. The instrumentation, the recording and, of course, his voice are all immaculate. I completely admire his voice but I kind of loathe it too, purely out of jealousy because I'll never be able to get that kind of silkiness.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

There's an Enrique Iglesias song called *Love To See You Cry*, which I absolutely love. It could be a Chris Isaac or Neil Diamond song. The lyric is really intriguing, he's sort of pushing his lover to become upset.

MY BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

I know this band as people, and I absolutely love them and their music, but I'd have to say The Darkness's *Pinewood Smile* [2017]. It wasn't a disappointment as such, it's just one of those records every band has – they're *good*, but they just don't compare to the bar they've set for themselves – and that one fell short.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

I literally cannot help but start moving when I hear Jackson Browne's *Everybody's Baby*. It's pure early eighties – a little bit of slap bass, some great organ playing, such an infectious groove. I love to listen to it when I'm putting on my little mod suit and getting ready to hit the town in LA – which is usually about five times every week.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

I Know You By Heart by Eva Cassidy. It just has so many attached memories. I'd smoke a couple of cigarettes before the morning bell at school and I'd listen to that song and dream about my future. And later on, with the relationships I've had – that song is talking about no matter what happens, there'll always be part of you I know through and through. It still hits me.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

It's going to be two songs: *Friday Night* by The Darkness and *Nevermore* by Queen. *Friday Night* reminds me of a crucial point in my life where me and my friends were just becoming old enough to get up to no good, and that song became an anthem to us. *Nevermore* is a song I used to smoke weed and get really high and listen to. I still love it.

"Jim Steinman has a [songwriting] style that is totally his own, you can feel his personality."

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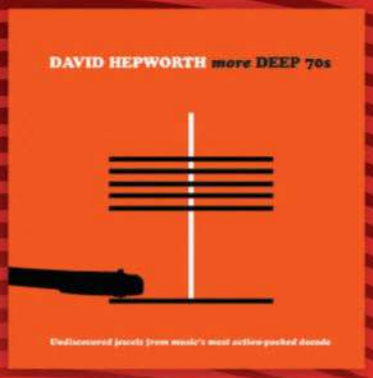

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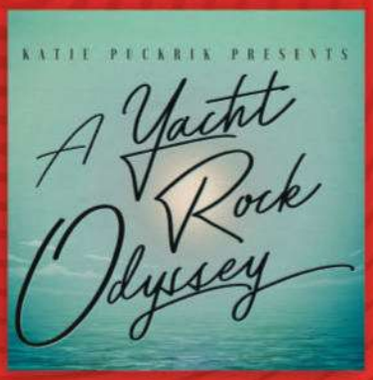

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